

Encore: Hairspray 2

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Summary: Hairspray Film 2007 "What do you do when what you want most and what you fear most are the same thing?" Can Tracy get over her reservations about her relationship with Link or will her fears ruin everything? And what about prom?

1. Chapter 1 'Good Morning Baltimore'

****Here it is, chapter one in full.**** ****Thanks to TiffanyNyC, Nor of Kiamo Ko and Transgenic-girl for the reviews, hopefully this will give you a better idea of my interpretation of Trink and the whole Hairspray universe. Keep up the reviewing. My ego and muse thank you.****

****Transgenic-girl - I'm glad you found it funny. I've been laughing and squeeing as I've been writing it...the notes for the later chapters especially.****

* * *

>Tracy was already awake when her alarm went off, alternatively excited and nervous about school. Link had kissed her two days ago, Penny and Seaweed got together and the show became integrated when Inez won the Miss Hairspray contest but school would be full of people asking why Link Larkin had kissed her and racism was still prevalent—but Link had kissed her. Her first kiss had been with the boy of her dreams. It had been a long time coming but every second of that kiss had been worth it. The crowd and the cameras and everything else had melted away and it was just Link slowly lowering his lips to hers. Tracy felt her temperature climb as she thought about it. She tried shaking her head to clear her mind but all it did was remind her that she hadn't done her hair. As she sat in front of the mirror with her comb and can of Ultra Clutch memories swam before her eyes.<p><p>

Everyone had gone back to Maybelle's Records to celebrate Inez's surprise win, even Corney and her parents were there. It had been

great seeing her parents dancing with Seaweed Inez and everybody else but it had meant she was too embarrassed to kiss Link again. He'd seemed to understand though, being content with holding her close for the slow songs and shaking it with her to the faster ones. It had been wonderful, everybody happy, kids and adults, black and white dancing, laughing and having fun. The fun had come to a sudden end when Penny's mom had shown up and shouted from the door 'Penelope Louise Pingleton!' Her best friend had gone home practically in tears and the atmosphere never really recovered. At the end of the party she and Link had promised to see each other before school, with the protest and the contest taking up Friday and Saturday they both needed Sunday to catch up on school work. As sensible as it sounded they both knew that, despite what Corney said, they needed to graduate with at least a couple of decent grades.

"Darlin if I thought I'd get any work done I'd be round your house first thing." He'd kissed her on the cheek and watched her as her dad drove off. She sighed as she realised she'd spent at least ten minutes daydreaming and not doing her hair.

"Tracy are you awake?" Edna walked in on her daughter as she finished her hair, it was a good deal flatter than usual. "Your hair looksâ€¦more like hair." Tracy smiled ruefully, her mama wasn't as fashion conscious as she was, not that she could take full advantage of new fashions being restricted as she was to shops like the Hefty Hideaway.

"It's not a new look mama. I can't stop thinking about Saturday." Edna smiled remembering the feeling of new love.

"I told you he was crazy about you."

"Yes ma you did."

"Hurry up and eat your breakfast before I do." Smiling Tracy grabbed her bag and went to the kitchen where bacon and eggs was waiting for her. Her mother may have been many things that people didn't like but nobody could fault her cooking. After attacking her food with gusto she took to watching the clockâ€¦half an hour until the bus, twenty seven minutes, twenty five, twenty four. She pressed a quick kiss to her father's cheek and yelled to her mother.

"I'm going nowâ€¦I'll see you after the show!" The door had shut before Edna had even poked her head out of the bedroom where she was making the bed. She walked over to her husband noticing the brown paper bag on the table.

"She left her lunch." Edna looked at the door wondering if she could catch Tracy while her husband looked at the lunch his little girl had forgotten.

"A Turnblad woman forgetting about foodâ€¦it must be love."

Link Larkin woke up with the usual Monday morning blues but they only lasted a second as the weekend came rushing back to him, Tracy in trouble, realising his feelings for her and then spending Saturday night with her only to have her haunt his thoughts all Sunday as he tried to catch up on the homework he put off all week. He was going to see her at school, no before. He'd pick her up in his car. That was what considerate boyfriends did right? He frowned remembering

that Amber refused to be seen in his black '57 Caddy. It was a nice car, a convertible 'but black is such a depressing colour'. What had he ever seen in Amber? Why was even wasting time thinking about her? He needed a shower, and more importantly than that, he needed to do his hair.

Once he was confident he looked as good as he usually did he grabbed his bag and drove over to Tracy's house arriving twenty minutes before the bus left. Knocking on the door he suddenly felt nervous, Tracy's mom had already cooked for him but he never thanked her for it and he had kissed Tracy in front of both of her parentsâ€|on live television.

"Oh Link thank goodness! Come in, come in." Edna's tone alarmed him.

"Is something wrong? Is Tracy alright?"

"She was in such a rush this morning she forgot her lunch. Would you mind taking it to her?"

"No of course not." He'd missed her. He was relieved that the only thing wrong was that she'd forgotten her lunch in her rush to get to school -to see him- but he was still disappointed that he'd have to wait a few more minutes to see her. He was about to leave when he remembered his manners. "The last time I was here I forgot to thank you for cooking for me. The pork was very good Mrs Turnblad."

She blushed. He'd actually made Tracy's mother blush. Why had he been worried?

"Link you charmer, there's no wonder my Tracy is crazy about you." Link smiled glad that he met with such approval.

"If it's alright with you ma'am I really should be going to school."

"'Ma'am', did you hear that Wilbur? He's such a little gentleman." Link glanced at Mr Turnblad as he looked up from his morning paper.

"I should hope so Ednaâ€|he's dating our little girl." Seeing that young Mr Larkin looked sufficiently intimidated Wilbur went back to his daily cartoons.

"Ignore him Link. You get off to school. Don't be late on account of me."

"Have a good day ma'am, sir." He nodded in Mr Turnblad's direction before going back outside. 'it's a beautiful day' Link thought, he wasn't usually given to such romantic thoughts but today was different. Today was the first day of school he'd been looking forward to in a long time and it was all because of Tracy.

Link got in his car and drummed his fingers on the steering wheel to a beat only he could hear as he drove. He couldn't remember ever feeling so good first thing Monday morning.

Oh, oh, oh

Woke up today feeling the start of something new

Oh, oh, oh

Can't wait to see her at school today, won't take no delay

My heart starts to race when I see her face

My dancing angel from high above

Oh, oh, oh

_I want to run out through the streets to the girl that I
love_

Good morning Baltimore! Wow my days don't suck anymore

Cause now my life is Amber free and I'm dating my Tracy

Good morning Baltimore at the show when we take to the floor

The world's gonna tune in and see Miss Turnblad and me

A stop light gave him a convenient opportunity to check his hear in
the rear view mirror without worrying about causing a crash.

Oh, oh, oh

Look at this hair What guy's can compare with mine today?

Oh, oh, oh

I've got my hairspray and radio I'm ready to go

_The folks on the street I distractedly greet _

They seem to say 'Tracy is good for you'

So, oh, oh

_Don't hold me back cause we're each other's dreams now come
true_

Checking his blind spot before taking a junction he noticed a
familiar figure, his next door neighbour's daughter Betty. He was
pretty sure that she was there everywhere he went but this morning he
just couldn't bring himself to care.

_Good morning Baltimore there's the stalker that lives next
door_

_She's the one near the pool of drool she always follows me to high
school_

Good morning Baltimore at the show when we take to the floor

The world gonna tune in and see Miss Turnblad and me

Pulling into the student parking lot Link saw Tracy stood with
Seaweed and Penny, she was quite far away but would have known where

she was if he was blindfolded.

She knows every step she knows every song

With her is the place where I belong

I see her with Penny and Seaweed ahead

Don't anyone block me or you'll soon be dead

So oh, oh

Give us a chance cause when we start to dance you'll see who we are

Oh, oh, oh

Something inside of me's drawn to her cause she's not Amber

My 'friends' tell me no but a voice tells me go

It's like it's coming straight from my heart

_So, oh, oh _

Don't make us wait one more moment for this thing to start

I love her Baltimore! Every day we'll kiss more and more

Every night with her I'm happy Tracy Turnblad's the world to me

And I promise Baltimore that some day when we take to the floor

The world's gonna finally see, gonna see what I see

In that girl Tracy, in my girl Tracyâ€|my girlfriend Tracy

Link jumped out of the car after checking his hair one last time, ok maybe two last times, and made his way through the onlookers and the handful of kids who were actually trying to get to homeroom to where Tracy was stood with Seaweed and Penny. She spotted him almost straight away, he smiled and gave her his trademark wink and a genuine smile she beamed back at him. 'So this is what dating a human being is like' he thought as his heart swelled within his chest as he got closer to Tracy.

"Hey darlin, I went by your house but you'd already left for the bus." He handed Tracy the brown paper bag she'd left on the table at home. "That's from your mama." He moved closer to her and gave her a lingering peck on the lips. "That's from me." She smiled dreamily clearly far away on planet Link, then she came back and recovered enough to speak.

"Thank you Linkâ€|" He smirked at her, loving how was thanking him for something he'd enjoyed just as much as she had. "I really appreciate it you bringing me my lunch." His smile faded slightly, did she not like the kiss? She smiled again. "And any time you want to do the other thingâ€|feel free." Link grinned and did it again,

ignoring the cat calls from their audience. He was with Tracy Turnblad and he didn't care who knew or what they thought about it. The warning bell rang out bursting their romantic little bubble.

"Did you hear the bells Tracy?" Penny asked with a smile, referring to the time Link bumped into her, Tracy cheeks coloured at the memory.

"Loud and clear," she muttered under her breath. Kissing Link was justâ€|wow. Looking up she saw him watching her reaction with his Link Larkin charm smile making him look confident and cool, everything that she wasn't at that precise moment.

"Am I missing something darlin?" his smile widened. "Do I need to know why hearing bells has got you blushin'?" Tracy knew that he positively did not need to know about her over the top reaction to an accidental touch. As much as she loved him she knew his ego was almost as big as she was. She glared at Penny who was about to tell him.

"Definitely not." Penny shrugged and put her lollipop back in. "We're going to be late." Tracy said trying to change the subject.

"Well in that case how would you feel about an armed escort to homeroom?" Link held out his arm and Tracy linked with Link. Penny and Seaweed followed hand in hand.

"It's not the arms you should be worrying about Tracy" Penny began sagely, "it's the hands." Seaweed and Penny shared a laugh at their friends' expense, Tracy and Link shrugged it off. It had been rather funny. When they got to Tracy's class Link took her to one side.

"Want to meet me for lunch? Your locker?"

"I guess that would be ok. Seeing as if it weren't for you I wouldn't have any lunch."

"If it weren't for me doll, you wouldn't have forgotten it."

"Just go already. You're going to be late."

"Don't I get a goodbye kiss? Just one?" Feeling increasingly like she was the centre of attention Tracy got on her tiptoes and kissed the tip of his nose then lightly pushed him away.

"You've had your kiss Mr Larkin, now go get educated. I'll see you at lunch."

"You better." Link gave her a wink and walked off. Tracy sighed and went into homeroom sitting by Penny who had saved her a seat.

"Are you ok Tracyâ€|you lookâ€|weird." Seaweed took one look at her smile and vacant expression.

"She's fine, she's just been bitten by the love bug." Sighing again Tracy found herself agreeing with her friend. She had been bitten by the love bugâ€|and it felt amazing.

2. Chapter 2 'Nicest Kids in Town'

The Nicest Kids in Town

History couldn't come soon enough, Tracy thought as she sat through another lesson with people whispering about her. It was only physics so she had spent most of the lesson on planet Link but when she had returned to earth to write down an equation or a rule she'd heard the whispers.

"He's _Link Larkin_ what can he possibly see in her?"

"I thought Amber was enough for him, looks like he wanted moreâ€|at least twice as much."

"I don't know maybe he knows something we don'tâ€|"

"Like how good she is in bed?"

"Yeah 'cause he'd be desperate enough to go there."

"Well he's been with Amber since the beginning of sophomore year. If he hadn'tâ€|you know. Then maybe he thought that he could get it over and done with in a couple of weeks if he went with someone nobody else wanted. Any longer and it would start getting embarrassing for him. He's seventeen and he's _Link Larkin._"

The last comment had hurt, Link wasn't like thatâ€|and she certainly wasn't. Link had been nothing but a gentleman, ok he was a charmer but a he was a gentlemanly one. It had been two daysâ€|if Sunday even counted and they hadn't even French kissed. Who on earth would sleep with somebody after two days. Tracy tried to convince herself that the rush of heat she felt was merely rage but there was a part of her that knew it was something else. She didn't get a chance to explore it as the bell went signalling the end of the period. Tracy was out of the door grateful that she had that one class with Link. The comments might not stop, they definitely wouldn't stop, but he'd be there to lift her spirits.

What Tracy had forgotten, or at least pushed to the back of her mind, was that Amber was also in her history class and as cruel as her comments had been when Tracy was just out-dancing her, now that Tracy was with link she was being downright horrid.

"Well I heard that her mother buys parachutes from Army surplus and just cuts three holes in them."

"Amber stop it!" Link whispered in his ex's direction. "It's not funny, it's not true and you're making yourself look stupidâ€|not that looking stupid has ever bothered you before." He grinned at Tracy who gave him a small smile in return, grateful that he was sticking up for her mother because he was nearer to Amber. Amber looked put out; Link had never been mean to her. It must be Tracy's influence, Tracy and her fat mother. She smiled maliciously then carried on with her comments.

"You know she hadn't left the house since fifty-one. She got so fat that she couldn't fit through the front door. She's spent the last decade washing other people's clothes for spare change. They

eventually got a special door fitted so she could embarrass herself on television. Did you see her dancing? She's disgusting." Tracy's patience evaporated. There was only so much she could take when it came to her family. She turned around to face Amber and said exactly what she thought of Velma Von Tussle, not caring about the volume of her voice.

"My mother's disgusting? What about yours? Your mother is disgusting cheat and a disgusting racistâ€|but then you'd know all about that. You're as bigoted and twisted as she is!" The class gasped, most agreed with at least part of what Tracy had said but the way she had said itâ€|well it was the most lively history class they'd had for a while.

"Miss Turnblad you will leave my classroom immediately! Nobody speaks like that in my class do you hear me?"

"Butâ€|" All she'd done was retaliate, Amber has started it. Ok maybe that defence only worked for five year olds but it didn't make it any less true. "Fine." Tracy packed her things and collected her detention slip from her teacher looking back at Link before she left the room. His heart did a funny lurching thing in his chest, she looked so sad even though she gave him a smile. It wasn't fair. She shouldn't have to face this alone. And she wouldn't. Link piled up the things on his desk ready to tuck under his arm and stood up. His classmates' eyes were all on him, clearly expecting more in-flight entertainment.

"Mr Larkin do you want to join your girlfriend in detention?" The teacher turned to look at him with his bag on his shoulder and his things under his arm.

"Yeah actually I do." He walked out of the class and found Tracy leaning against the nearby lockers. "Darlin I don't know about you but I think history is getting old." Tracy groaned at his joke. Smiling at her reaction he took her hand and began walking to detention hoping Seaweed would be there so they could talk about something other than the spiteful gossip.

"So do you tell any funny jokes or should I give up hope now?" Link gave her hand a squeeze and winked at her.

"What can I say baby, I've always been bad." She rolled her eyes at him and opened the door to detention.

"Cracker boy what did you make her do now?" Seaweed Stubbs was sat on a table moving his upper body in time to the music playing from someone's radio. He waved them over to where he was sat with Penny

"I shouted at Amber for talking about my mother."

"Trace you're missing out best bit." Seaweed and his friends looked up suddenly interested.

"There's a best bit?" Tracy was suddenly embarrassed, she didn't feel guilty about saying those things about Velma but she felt bad about _that_.

"She said that Velma Von Tussle was a disgusting racist. The whole

class heard." People started cheering and clapping Tracy on the back

"And what did you do?"

"The teacher asked if I wanted to join my girlfriend in detention. I gave him an honest answer." Tracy smiled at him.

"You didn't tell me that!" Her heart melted a little at his shrug, as if it was no big deal. He didn't get that she was used to fighting all her battles alone. She turned to her friends. "Why are you two here?" Seaweed smiled and put his arm around here.

"Well we were in French and Madame Giry asked Penny what 'je voudrais aller Ã Paris combien coÃ»te le billet de train' was in English." Link raised an eyebrow; it seemed like a fairly simple question.

"What did you say?" Penny reddened.

"Seaweed." The people around her laughed.

"I couldn't help it! He was looking at me." She looked at Tracy hoping for some help. "You know how your head goes fuzzy when they look at youâ€¦don't you?" Tracy gave Link a sidelong glance, not meeting his eyes or looking at anything anywhere near his face.

"I don't know what you mean Penny." Seaweed laughed, coming to Tracy's rescue.

"Looks like Link Larkin's losing his touch." It was Link's turn to be laughed at but he bore it well knowing that Tracy was definitely affected by him as much as he was by her. He put his arm around her waist holding her close.

"My touch isn't going anywhere." There was another rush of heat and there was no way that Tracy could pass that off as anger.

"It's a pity that cow Amber isn't. Tracy's ma's really nice and she's a good dancer, we all saw her. Amber's just jealous and used to getting her own wayâ€¦one of the 'Nicest Kids in Town' my black ass!" Inez's comment made them all laugh, even Link had to stifle a very uncool snigger.

"Inez if momma catches you talking like that you'll be gargling soap for a month." Seaweed tried to look serious and older-brotherly but he couldn't stop smiling.

"Well it's true. We don't bring people down because we don't like the way they look. I have no idea what Tracy sees in ugly old Link but do I go around saying thatâ€¦oh I guess I do." She smiled and carried on clearly not meaning a word of the insult. Link just rolled his eyes at Seaweed, grateful that he, like Penny and Tracy, was an only child. "Anyway what I mean is, we're the nicest kids in town." She climbed up on top of the nearest desk and started singing.

****Inez:****

Ev'ry afternoon when the clock strikes three

Detention's full of kids like you and me

We throw off our coats and leave the squares behind

And then we shake it, shake it, shake it Like we're losing our minds

We'll never put you down cause we're the nicest kids in town

****Tracy:****

Every afternoon if your face don't belong

****Seaweed:****

If that bimbo Amber hates you

****Link:****

Or if you've proved her wrong

Link gave Tracy a look showing how proud he was of her, she grinned in return.

****Everybody:****

Oh yeah you twist and shout with your favourite star

And once you've practiced every step that's in your repertoire

You can still hang around cause we're the nicest kids in town

****Tracy:****

Real nice kids who like to lead the way

****Penny:****

And we don't care what the haters say

****P,*** S, T, L+I:****

And we're the ones who broke the brand new ground

We mean integration it's the latest, greatest, Baltimore sound

****Everybody:****

So every afternoon Drop everything

Join us in detention where we dance and sing

****Inez:****

Forget about dumb blonde Amber and dance with us

She's such a skanky ho she's always causing fuss

"Inez language!"

Come turn that frown upside down with the nicest kids in town

****Link:****

_R-r-r-roll
Call!!_

Inez

Rhonda

Duane

Germaine

Janetta

Skillet

Penny

Seaweed

Tracy

Tracy watched as Link's hips did their Elvis impression, he was taking his sweet time, clearly missing being the last in the line-up. She decided to put everyone out of their miseryâ€|plus watching his hips move was doing dangerous things to her ability to breathe.

****Tracy:****

And he's Link!

Link frowned as Tracy stole his thunder but one look at her dancing and smiling and his frown evaporated, he just couldn't stay mad at her.

****Everybody:****

So if every night you're shaking as you lie in bed and the bass and drums are pounding in your head

Who cares about sleep when you can snooze in school?

You'll never get to college but you'll sure look cool

_Don't need a cap and a gown to be the nicest Kids in town. We're the nicest, nicest. We're the nicest, nicest. We're the sugar 'n' spicest, _

The nicest kids in... Kids in town!

Everyone moved from their final dance positions, Link giving Inez a hand as she jumped down from a desk. Tracy saw him doing it and her insides went gooey. This was the guy she had fallen for. She'd had a crush on the on-screen persona that was such a large part of his personality but the guy he was when the cameras weren't rolling, that was the guy she loved. Taking her eyes off Link for a second she saw her best friend watch her own boyfriend with something of a troubled expression. There was something on her mind. It was a rare enough occurrence for Tracy to worry about it. On her way over to Penny, Tracy realised it was something serious. Penny had tears in her eyes and she wasn't a girl who cried very often.

"Penny what's wrong?" Penny glanced at Seaweed who was talking to Duane about a new record then dragged Tracy into the corner of the room away from everyone else.

"We had a huge fight Saturday." Tracy frowned, Penny and Seaweed had been perfectly happy until Trudy hadâ€|oh.

"Penny your mother is just trying to look after youâ€|in her own very, very warped way. it's her way of showing she cares."

"She doesn'tâ€|not anymore."

"I'm sure that's not true."

"It is. I said some horrible things. She was being so mean about you and Seaweedâ€|I snapped." Tracy understood that feeling well given what had just happened in history.

"You can apologise and everything will be ok."

"Tracy I said that there was no wonder daddy turned to crime! That prison must seem like a holiday camp after living with her, that he must have been so relieved when he was found guilty."

Link and Seaweed were at the other end of the room stood side by side watching the conversation and trying to mask their concern over the troubled looks on their girlfriends' faces.

"You like football?" Link asked, trying to fill the awkward silence and give his brain something to do besides worry that something was wrong.

"Basketball." Seaweed replied before devoting all his attention to Penny.

"I can do what I like now Tracy. My mother doesn't care anymore. I can see Seaweed whenever I wantâ€|and I'm happy, really happy about that but Tracyâ€|" Penny paused while she tried to get her emotions under control. "I know I have you and Seaweed but I don't have a family anymore." Tracy put her arm around her best friend, who after over a decade of friendship was more like a sister.

"Well you're more than welcome to share mine. You know my mama always cooks too much food." Penny laughed but Tracy noticed that her bottom lip was looking decidedly wobbly. Seaweed saw it too and went to her. She buried her face in his chest and he put her arms around her looking to Tracy for some kind of explanation. Tracy mouthed 'mother' and Seaweed understood. Leaving them to and talk in the cornered Tracy

went back to Link.

"Trace?" Link was pretty sure it was Penny who had the problem this time but Tracy still looked upset.

"Her mother practically disowned her, they had a huge fight Saturday because of Seaweed. It's not fair." Link put his arm around her not knowing what to say, then a troubling thought popped into his head.

"Your parents definitely like meâ€|right?" Tracy was surprised at the hint of uncertainty in his voice. She was sure she was one of the few to hear it.

"Link my mama wants to adopt you. I'm not sure about my dad but he's a pretty easy going guyâ€|I mean there was that one time when he brutally murdered a boy for pushing me overâ€|" Link's face blanched, Tracy noticed and smiled. "Link I'm kidding. He's happy if me and mama are happy and I amâ€|happy I mean." Link's colour returned as he pressed a kiss to Tracy's forehead.

"Darlin you say the sweetest things."

****A/N: ten bonus points if you can identify the quote and the other reference in this chapter!!!****

****The French translates as 'I would like to go to Paris how much is the train ticket' it probably isn't grammatically accurate but it was an online translation and I don't care.****

****I know Penny might have been ooc but there wasn't really enough of her in the film for her to come across as anything but slightly slow loyal and hot for Seaweed.****

3. Chapter 3 'Baltimore Crabs'

****Woohoo! 599 hits! Thanks to everyone for reading and the 2.5 percent of you that are reviewing, especially those of you who are doing it more than once.****

****Warning: There is a bit of rudeness in this chapterâ€|but it's all aimed at Velma so I guess that makes it ok, even funnyâ€|she says hopefully.****

Chapter three Baltimore Crabs

-One day later- (Tuesday June 5th)

While walking to meet some of her friends for lunch Li'l Inez had the misfortune to cross the path of some of Amber's friends, that girl had a whole crowd of followers that weren't on the show and idolised her. Inez accidentally bumped one of them on her way past saying sorry even though she knew, had the situation been reversed, they wouldn't extend the same courtesy.

"I know you're in a rush to get to the plantation but there's no need to be rude!" one of them spat, unaware of the irony of her words. Inez kept going walking straight past her brother, Duane and Germaine while muttering about what those girls could do with a piece of sugar

cane. Seaweed had heard everything and watched the girls as they walked off laughing and joking as if nothing had happened.

"Why can't they leave her alone? She's just a kid."

"It's Amber's influence."

"You mean it her mother's influence."

"Yeah. I'm so glad she got fired."

****Duane: ****

Oh thank god now times have changed

****Germaine:****

That broad's either blind or completely deranged

****Seaweed:****

And I heard from Walt that she caught the Baltimore Crabs

Having met Link and Tracy at Tracy's locker Penny was walking with them to where her boyfriend usually at his lunch outside. Link realised what they're singing about and didn't really want Tracy hearing things like that because he assumed that she didn't know what they were singing about. He _really_ _didn't_ want to explain it to her. _That_ _would_ be a conversation to be avoided at all possible cost.

****Seaweed:****

Childhood dreams for us are fact

Now that blonde haired banshee's stopped stopping our act

****S, D+G: ****

She started to moult when she had the Baltimore Crabs

Tracy's eyes widened as she grasped the full meaning of the joke and began alternating between amused scandalised and embarrassed.

****Seaweed:****

She really screwed up I bet she has grudges

****D+G:****

'_Stead of padding her cups she screwed the judges_

She cheated to win knowing not to rely on her dance

It was pants!

****Seaweed:****

When we hit the stage her temper would blaze

As if Negro Day was just some crazy phase

****S, D+G:****

_It was her own stupid fault that she got the Baltimore
Crabs_

She's out of our lives

We're glad she got fired

She made us sick

And she'll say she retired

First impression were enough and when we saw her we knew it

Yes she always played rough broke the rulesâ€|nothing to it

God what a bitch so blonde and mean

A tramp and a racist who acts like she's queen.

****Seaweed:****

But it's hard to get rid ofâ€| the Baltimore Crabs!

Penny looked on completely oblivious to theâ€|ahem, sexual references, in the song. Seaweed was such a good singer and soooo dreamy. Link cleared his throat loudly announcing their presence. He pointedly looked at Seaweed then Penny and Tracy. Seaweed then understood that their song had had an unexpected audience.

"Hey baby! So how much of that did you hear?" He asked nervously, Penny just sucked on her lollipop, he really was ultra dreamy.

"We heard more than enough." Tracy said, not looking at Link until she was sure that she wouldn't embarrass herself further. She couldn't tell if Seaweed was blushing but he did look awfully uncomfortable.

"Anyway, mama's having another platter party tonight after the show." He said quickly desperate to steer the conversation away from Miss Baltimore's crabs. "She's been made co-host. As of Monday it's the Corney Collins Show with Motormouth Maybelle."

"That's great!" Tracy said beaming; still not quite believe that five little words, 'maybe we should just march', had caused so much change for the better.

"You're coming then?" He said to her, his mother would kill him slowly if the girl who had done so much for their family wasn't there to celebrate with them. Tracy laughed, of course she was going.

"Good music and your mama's cooking? I think I'll go home and study calculus instead."

"I guess that means you're invited too cracker boy." Link saw straight through the pretence at not liking him.

"Gee I'm feelin the love. It's heart warming, really." He said with a smile.

On arriving to the studio that day Tracy went straight to Corney.

"I heard about Maybelle. I can't believe it." Corney smiled at one of his favourite council members.

"Believe it Tracy. You did it. I had been thinking about it for a while but you gave me the push I needed." He gestured with his arm at the mix of black and white kids talking and practising, even sharing Ultra Clutch. "This is down to you and there isn't a person here who doesn't know that." He nodded in Link's direction. "Looks like Link wants to work on some moves with you." Tracy felt her pulse shoot up and began to think that being with Link could give her a heart attackâ€|but oh what a way to go.

After another great show Link drove the five of them to Maybelle's with the hood down and the music on loud. People on the street looking up as they passed saw a car full of famous local kids, black and white, singing along and, with the exception of Link who was driving, rocking out to rock and roll. They all got out the car singing the chorus of the last song they'd listened to, Penny, Seaweed and Inez went in but Tracy waited for Link as he put the hood up on his car. Wet upholstery was uncool. As they joined hands to walk in together they couldn't help thinking how much had changed since both of them had last been there.

"Tracy!" Maybelle spotted her as soon as she came in and went right over smiling.

"Congratulations." Tracy found herself returning a hug from the woman she admired so much. "I knew you'd do it eventually."

"Nonsense. It wasn't me that gave Corney the kick up the butt and made Mr Ultra Clutch see sense. If you ever need anything Tracy just ask. After everything you've done for us it's the least I can do." Tracy smiled shyly, still holding Link's hand.

"I've got everything I need right now. Ms Maybelle." Maybelle glanced at Link who was looking like happier than she'd ever seen him with the Von Tussle girl.

"So I see. Well go and call your mama then help yourself to some food." Tracy's jaw dropped. Her mother didn't know where she was. Maybelle smiled remembering when she was Tracy's age.

"I'll be right back." Link gave her hand a squeeze before letting her

go. Penny grabbed her on the way back to Link after calling her mother.

"Before I forgetâ€¦Inez asked me to go swimming with her in the local pool on Sunday. Do you want come with us? You don't have to. I meanâ€¦I should get to know Inez... but I remembered what you said at your audition andâ€¦it was a stupid idea." Tracy knew why Penny had asked her and why she was expecting her to say no. Tracy hadn't been swimming since she was thirteen when a cruel older boy had made a quip about her being Monstro, the whale from Disney's Pinocchio. Her swimming costume had gone in the garbage that day and she hadn't bought another one since. Penny knew what had happened because she'd been the one that Tracy had cried to in the changing rooms. Tracy wanted to go butâ€¦wait, what was she thinking? She didn't think she'd ever get on the show because of her appearance and not only was she on it she was one of the public's favourites.

"It's just going to be you, me and Inez?" She didn't really want Seaweed seeing her in swimwear and the thought of Link seeing her in what was essentially underwear filled her with dread. Penny nodded and Tracy breathed a sigh of relief.

"I'll have to go buy a new swimsuit but yesâ€¦I'll go." After jumping up and down with glee Penny gave her a hug and went to tell Inez. Tracy watched her go with a smile until someone put their hand over her eyes.

"Guess who darlin." A voice whispered in her ear sending chills through her body. There was no mistaking that voice for anybody else's, firstly nobody but Link would do that to her, except maybe her father but he wasn't even there and secondly, that was the voice she'd been hearing while she slept for three years. She smiled and pretended to guess.

"Hmm. I'd have to say a guyâ€¦but I know so many. Darlinâ€¦that narrows it downâ€¦I think I'm going to go withâ€¦Corney Collins?" Link span her round with the grace only a dancer could manage and put his hands on her waist.

"You, Tracy Turnblad, are a tease." There was something about the way Link said it, the expression on his face, that caused a heat wave the likes of which Baltimore had never seen much less Tracy Turnblad.

"I- I am not!" Tracy said hotly, surprising him. She was such an easy going person, he'd never actually seen her mad.

"Trace I was just messing with you. Are you alright?"

"I just need some air." 'And a cold shower' she added mentally. It more crowded than usual at Maybelle's and that only made her more flustered.

"Let's go get some then." Link lead her to the back of the shop and out into the Stubbs' back yard. It was empty except for them; the people who wanted to smoke must have chosen to go out the front. They stood in comfortable silence for a couple of minutes, Link leaning against the wall with Tracy by his side while Link moved almost imperceptibly to the music coming from inside the record store. "You feeling better doll?" Tracy smiled and nodded, embarrassed that Link

had noticed how worked up she got. "That's good." He smiled and moved so he was stood facing her. "Because I had an ulterior motive in bringing you out here." Link put his hands on her waist and Tracy thought that her heart was going to burst, dreaming of being with Link paled in comparison to the reality. She took a step back and hit the wall; Link closed the space between them a moment later. "I've been wanting to get you alone all day."

He lowered his face to hers and kissed her. It was tender and like it had been the first time but this kiss was different, it wasn't quite as gentle, it wasn't their first kiss so there was less caution. Link definitely knew how to kiss and besides what his lips were doing they were alone and he had her up against a wall. A powerful surge of feelings caught her off guard. She wanted, needed, Link to hold her tighter, kiss her harder, deeper, never let her go. The intensity of this need scared her, she'd had feelings for Link for years, imagined kissing him but she'd never thought in a thousand years it would be anything other than romantic, that she'd feel this—unladylike. If she knew of a guy that felt this way she'd think of him as a horn-dog, she didn't think she was supposed to feel like this. Tracy hid her confusion as well as she could when they parted. Link smiled warmly, he obviously wasn't caught up in a maelstrom of inappropriate thoughts and feelings. _Well who'd have those thoughts and feelings about you Tracy Turnblad? _A treacherous voice whispered in her mind. She knew everybody had that inner voice bringing them down but for people who looked like she and her mother did, the voice was a lot louder and harder to ignore. Tracy felt her mask slip a little.

"Trace?" She forced a smile.

"People will be wondering where we are." Link was secretly disappointed, he'd hoped that she'd let him French kiss her. Stepping back Link put his fake smile on and held out his hand, wondering how he was supposed to let her know how he felt about her when he couldn't find the right words and she wouldn't let his actions speak for him.

"Then let's go back in and show 'em how to dance." He was determined to get it right with Tracy and if that meant going slower than her friend Penny doing a math test then so be it. His relationship with Amber had died because she didn't want a boyfriend she wanted a status symbol and although he hadn't even got to first base with her in the last nine months of their farcical relationship he cared about Tracy too much to push her into doing something she didn't want. Tracy took his hand and followed him back into the record shop trying to ignore the heat spreading through her and the voice in the back of her mind.

He doesn't feel that way about you Tracy—nobody could.

**REVIEW REVIEW REVIEW!!!*...please

4. Chapter 4 Drowning on Dry Land pt 1

**A/N: Title taken from an episode of 'Grey's Anatomy' it seemed appropriate—you'll see what I mean by the end of the chapter. I hope you're stocking up on the fanfic reading necessities, (chocolate, a drink and tissues) because we're about to dive in the

deep end. And yes I am going to stop with the bad puns before I hurt someone.**

A/N 2: because of my obsession with rewriting lyrics I've added two more songs while trying to write this chapterâ€|bear in mind I've already planned for over twenty chaptersâ€|that's a lotta lyricsâ€|the song is by Dashboard Confessionals and it's called 'The place you have come to fear the most' I don't own it. I have rewritten the lyrics slightly (quelle surprise) but they aren't actually involved in the story. Instead of a musical this chapter's more like your typical son fic with the song commenting on Tracy's state of mind. I don't own the Britney Spears song I'm going to use eitherâ€|because if I did I'd be Britney Spears, which I'm not. (See first author's note for tree comment) anyway back to Baltimore!

A/N 3: This is only the first half of chapter fourâ€|it turned out a lot longer than I anticipated but I thought you'd like a new chapter so I split it in two.

Chapter four Drowning on Dry Land

-Two days later- (Thursday 10th)

"Tracy Turnblad! A pleasure as always." Mr Pinky welcomed her with open arms, as he did every customer with an open wallet, but it didn't feel like a pleasure to Tracy. Link had asked her to the movies and instead of sitting in the back row of the cinema with her boyfriend watching stupidly attractive people on the big screen she'd had to tell him that she was running an errand for her mother and that her mother would be embarrassed if Link went with her. God knows she couldn't have told him the truth because he might have wanted to come with her anyway. Shopping for swimwear with Link would have been mortifying. 'Do you want the double or triple extra large miss?' 'I don't know. What do you think Link? Should I go for the dairy cow size or the buffalo?' There was also the rather crucial matter of Link not knowing she swam, or that she didn't swim. Her and swimming was a complete and utter no go area for Link as far as she was concerned. Link would not be told about what happened the last time she went into a pool, Link would not know that she was going to be in a pool and above allâ€|Link Larkin would not be seeing her in swimwear. Tracy didn't feel like she had any other choice, although she felt awful for lying to him, she just couldn't imagine him seeing her like that and not have it end badly. She knewâ€|well she was pretty sure, that it was just that little voice inside her head but as she glance around the store seeing plus sized women looking at slightly outdated plus sized clothes she couldn't help flashing back to the first platter party at Maybelle's.

I just think this adventure's a little too big for me

He had no idea how those words had hurt her, not really. He wasn't stupid, of course he knew that he had hurt her at the time but how could Link know that it was forgiven but not forgotten, that his poor choice of words came back to haunt her every time she heard a spiteful comment about them as a couple or she had doubts about their

relationship. She sighed trying to get the uncomfortable experience over with as quickly as she could and then get Sunday over with and Link would never have to know about any of it. Everything would work itself out. It was the only sequence of events she was prepared to accept.

"I need a swimming costume." Tracy said in a voice just loud enough to not be a mumble. Mr Pinky had hoped that his spokesperson would be going on another spree but if she _needed _a costume at least he could be sure of a purchase.

"Wonderful, a new shipment came in just two days ago. Nadine will give you all the help you need. Nadine?" The attractive young black woman that Tracy recognised from Negro day and remembered from her mother's first excursion out of the house in years came over and smiled at her. "Miss Turnblad would like a swimsuit. I'm leaving her in your capable hands." He smiled graciously and then walked away to schmooze some of his other customers.

"So is your boyfriend taking you to the pool?" Nadine asked as she walked Tracy over to the swimwear display.

"Link is _**not**_ seeing me in swimwear!" The vehemence of Tracy's reply surprised Nadine and Tracy immediately felt bad, Nadine was only trying to make conversation. Tracy tried to make it up to her.

"I'm going to the pool off North Avenue on Sunday with Inez Stubbs and my friend Penny." Nadine's smile widened.

"Little Inez is such a show off. I swear that girl thinks she's the only person in the world who can do a handstand underwater." Tracy thought this sounded very much like the Inez she knew.

"You went swimming with Little Inez?"

"I used to baby-sit for Maybelle. She helped me get this job in case the Dynamites don't work out." They came to the display and Nadine took a good look at what they had to offer, familiarising herself with the new stock. "What exactly were you looking for?" Tracy had no clue. Swimwear was not her speciality.

"Have you got any that make me look something other than huge?"

"Tracy!" She tried to reel in her frustration at the whole situation. She was trying to be there for Penny so she wasn't the only white girl in the pool on Sunday but that had meant time not spent with Link, time that came with its own set of fun problems, and now she was lying about a stupid swimsuit when she could have been enjoying herself or trying to at the very least. Life had been so much simpler before she auditioned for the Corney Collins. But not better she quickly corrected, life had not been better when all she and Penny had was each other and watching the show. She looked apologetically at Nadine.

"Sorryâ€¦I just want to find one and go home. I can't believe I cancelled a date for this." Nadine overlooked Tracy's unusually antisocial mood, there was clearly something wrong.

"Ok so we're going for aesthetics over comfort. It won't matter too much because I doubt you'll be in the pool for very long. Most people manage about an hour with Inez. How about this one? It has a built in modesty apron and hidden controls panels. It even matches your hair." Nadine had picked out a one piece in black with an inch wide band of white below the bust and one above. "The white will draw attention away from other places." She said using the well established language of 'you're fat but I'm being nice'.

"I'll take it." Tracy just wanted to go home and forget about the whole thing but she'd promised Penny and Tracy Turnblad didn't break her promises.

-Saturday -

"What are you doing tomorrow?" Link asked as they rehearsed the new song of the week at the studio. Tracy contained her panic.

"Are you planning on not doing any schoolwork at all this week? I wouldn't want you to be put in Special Ed because of me." He smiled and leaned in close.

"Darlin don't tell anybody this but my GPA is actually 3.4, I'm not going in Special Ed and I've done all my schoolwork."

"I'm dating a brain, I'm so ashamed." She gave him a grin reassuring him that she was kidding. The new choreographer saw them whispering and although she was a lot nicer than Velma, she wasn't a pushover.

"Canoodle on your own time Mr Larkin."

"How do you know it wasn't Tracy?" The choreographer's face stayed stoic although there was a smile in her eyes.

"Years of experience and the fact that Miss Turnblad isn't the one making mistakes." She proceeded to show Link where he had been going wrong, it was the smallest thing but she still wouldn't let him talk to Tracy, who was less than a foot away from him, until he had the dance perfected. "Ok have half an hour for lunch and don't wander off." The dancers dispersed but Tracy and Link stayed in the middle of the set.

"You didn't answer my question Trace." Tracy sighed.

"I made plans with Penny and Inez. If I could get out of it I would but I made a promise." Link had barely seen her all week, aside from before school, during school and after school at the studio and today at practise. He'd spent his evenings doing chores and schoolwork so that the one day he wasn't at the studio he could have completely to himself to spend how he chose. He chose to spend it with Tracy even if it meant helping her with her schoolwork under the watchful and rather creepy eyes of her dad.

"That's ok doll. A promise is a promise. What would happen to

Baltimore if Tracy Turnblad went back on her word." He said, teasing her gently.

"Nothing compare to what would happen to you if you made me do it." She retorted before going to get the lunches her mom had packed for them. Link's dad wasn't exactly domesticated which was good in some ways because Link had learned to cook for himself but after Edna had worked out he didn't have a mother she took on the role, packing him the same delicious lunches as she packed for her daughter.

"I suppose it would be too much to ask that you stop romancing long enough to dance huh cracker boy?" Seaweed asked coming over.

"I've got a reputation to uphold you know." Link smoothed back an imaginary stray hair. "Do you know what the girls are doing with your sister tomorrow?" He asked as cool as disinterested as anybody has ever been.

"Not a clue." Looking around Seaweed spotted his sister. "Hey Inez! Get over here!" Inez frowned at being yelled at but came anyway. "What's happening tomorrow?"

"Nothing important. I'm just going swimming with Penny and Tracy. You can come if it means that much to you. Jeez." Inez rolled her eyes ran back to her friends and her lunch. Link looked at Seaweed wondering if he was thinking the same thing as him, that they should crash the girls-only day out at the pool.

"So do we swim?" Not quite getting disinterestedness Link managed to at least avoid sounding eager, his friend turned to him smiling.

"We
swim."

Now that you know what other artists I'm going to use in addition to the ost, namely Elvis, The Beatles, Fergie and Britney, you can amuse meâ€|I mean amuse yourselves by guessing what songs I'm going to use and what those songs could mean for Tracy and Link...just a thought.

5. Chapter 5 Drowning on Dry Land pt 2

Drowning on Dry Land Part 2

Standing at the opposite side of her room to her vanity table Tracy looked at her reflection in the mirror she usually used for doing her hair. She'd thought it was a good idea to try on the swimsuit before wearing it in public. Nadine had made a good choice, it had to be said. The two white stripes did draw eyes away from the parts of her that she was most self-conscious about, namely everything between her bust and her calves. Having decided that it would be pointless to take the thing off to put it back on again Tracy put underwear in her bag along with her towel, catching her reflection in the mirror again. It wasn't as bad as she thought. The hidden control panels actually did their job, she looked more streamlined than she'd been

expecting. Putting a skirt and blouse on over the top Tracy noticed that the costume had made her clothes slightly looser than normal. She didn't feel scared about going swimming, she feltâ€¦almost good about the way she looked, of course she wasn't putting herself in context with other people, she wasn't that masochistic.

Penny had met her outside the pool, not wanting to walk in alone and Tracy, knowing that she would be ready far sooner than her friend, promised to go look for Inez in the pool then come back. Exiting the changing rooms and being suddenly faced with strangers made Tracy feel self-conscious and exposedâ€¦but it would be ok after a while, when she spotted Inez and Penny joined her, it wasn't like Link was walking out of the men's changing roomâ€¦oh my god Link was walking out of the men's changing room.

Tracy's eyes dropped south of Link's face rapidly absorbing all the new visual informationâ€¦pecsâ€¦absâ€¦oh sweet Jesus. The way she was looking at that bodyâ€¦she wanted to do things to that boy that she couldn't even tell Penny about, even though Penny had confided in her details about Seaweed she definitely could have lived without knowing. What Tracy felt wasn't so much a rush of heat as a tidal wave. She wanted that boy. Good god he was a hunk! She's always thought he was dreamy but suddenly seeing Link wearing substantially less than he usually did was doing wonders for her daydreams. Trying desperately to get her thoughts back to something approaching pg-13 she briefly wondered what he was going to do about his hair if it got wet. When he turned around almost looking in her direction, she ducked back inside in the safe haven of the women only area. She hadn't wanted him to see her when she thought he was handsome but now she knew he wasâ€¦he couldn't see her like this, crammed into a frumpy costume and so obviously thinking thoughts that would make Velma Von Tussle blush.

Tracy had decided, she wasn't going to move from where she was until was convinced that she wasn't going to have a heart attack. She'd stay where it didn't matter so much if someone noticed that her swimsuit was now fighting a losing battle with her wobbly bits. She didn't much care what strangers thought about her but she cared a great deal about Link's opinion of her and a public pool was not her choice of venue for the grand unveiling nor was she anywhere near ready for it. Walking as quickly as she could without drawing attention to herself she hid herself in the changing rooms wondering what the hell someone who looked like an Adonis was doing with someone people called a sweat hog. The longer her relationship with Link had lasted the more she became convinced that it was impossible for it to be real.

Why had he come? How had he known? Tracy sat in a cubicle shutting the door behind her and locking it. Now she had seen howâ€¦god even the memory of Link prevented her from forming a thought. Link wasâ€¦Link, and she was just Tracy. She was dating the guy of her dreams and she had never felt uglier. She could have cried at the bitter irony of the timing of her inferiority complex and now her day was complete as the swimsuit had begun to get uncomfortable, even started to hurt, as it tried to make her look like something resembling a woman. What had happened to her? What had happened to the confident girl she used to be, the one who didn't care what people thought?

But you do care, you care what **he** thinks that poisonous

voice whispered in her head, answering her question. It was true. Everybody else she cared about, her parents, Penny, Seaweed, Inez and Maybelle, they liked her for who she was on the inside, which was fine. They didn't have to think she was beautiful, prettyâ€¦or even tolerable. She knew Link liked her butâ€¦and this was the sixty-four thousand dollar questionâ€¦did he feel even a fraction of what she felt? She couldn't imagine him feeling close to fainting having inappropriate thoughts about her. It was far easier to imagine him fighting the urge to laugh. And why didn't she just go and ask him, or leave the changing room? Why didn't she put herself out of this self-inflicted misery, end the torturous uncertainty? Because in the uncertainty and doubt there was also hope, the tiny hope that Link felt the same way. Tracy wasn't ready to have that hope die. Eight days ago Link had fulfilled her adolescent fantasy and kissed her, just under two hundred hours ago, in front of the whole cast, crew, audience and viewing public, and she honestly didn't know what she'd do if he turned around and said 'I hope we can still be friends darlin'. There was also the fact that asking Link how he felt would be extremely awkward. 'Link I was wonderingâ€¦do you picture us doing things that my daddy would kill you for?' She sighed and got her clothes out of the locker she couldn't go in the pool and she couldn't sit in the changing rooms like she was afraid of the waterâ€¦worrying about whether or not she could still swim hadn't even occurred to her, she'd got enough on her mind already.

Unaware of the turmoil his mere presence had caused for his girlfriend Link walked into the pool area and scanned the pool for the familiar faces of Seaweed and Little Inez. They spotted him first as he stood out like a sore thumb and less than ten seconds after Inez had said hello to him she dunked him under the water. She'd got sick of waiting to mess around with Penny and Tracy so she'd picked on Link, she wasn't about to dunk strangers and her big brother was wise to all her tricks. He surfaced spluttering with his hair stuck to his face

"Inez!" He made a move to catch her and retaliate but she was like a fish, as at home in the water as she was dancing. Giving up his quest for vengeance Link made his way over to Seaweed who was stood in the shallow end waiting for his girl. "Your sister just tried to kill me, she destroyed my 'do'." Seaweed laughed.

"If she hadn't I would have." He smiled and Link followed his gaze seeing Penny climbing into the pool but couldn't see his girlfriend anywhere. "Calm down cracker boy, she's probably still trying to protect her hair." Penny waded over to Seaweed in her green one piece, a similar style to Tracy's but much more comfortable, and gave Seaweed a chaste hello kiss. "Hey baby. Tracy still in there?" Penny frowned.

"She was ready before me. I'll go check." Penny reluctantly left her boyfriend after less than thirty seconds and went back into the changing rooms. "Tracy?"

"In here." Penny followed the voice and found Tracy already dressed and ready to go. "I have to go."

"Why? Link's here."

"You knew he was coming!" Tracy hissed at her best friend.

"Not until I saw him in the pool. I think Inez invited himâ€|Seaweed's hereâ€|" Her voice trailed off dreamily.

"I can't stay I justâ€|can't."

"Why are you upset? Is it because of the last time we went swimming?"

"No it'sâ€|Link in swimwear, dreamyâ€|me? The stuff of nightmares. I was planning on staying dressed around my first boyfriend for more than eight days and I would rather he didn't see all the water jump out the pool when I jump in." Penny thought she was being slightly ridiculous but Tracy did have a tendency to get dramatic.

"What do you want me to say to everybody?"

"I don't know. Think of something believable, tell them I said it. I'll see you at school tomorrow." Tracy left the pool and got on the next bus back to her neighbourhood upset and so frustrated she could scream, knowing that the reason she felt so rotten was because she cared so much about Link. She knew people said 'love hurts' but this was crazy, she'd wanted to get out of that place so badly she hadn't even taken her stupid costume off. Link and the others would be having fun, dunking each other and doing handstands and she was sat on a bus on her own feeling miserable. Tracy wiped away a tear telling herself she had something in her eye.

****Buried deep as you can dig inside yourself****

****And covered with a happy shell****

****Such a charming beautiful exterior****

****Laced with brilliant smiles and shining eyes, perfect posture****

****But you're barely scraping by****

When Penny returned to the others in the pool her smile was just a little too bright and Seaweed, having spent quite some time admiring her face, noticed straight away.

"What's wrong baby?"

"Tracy had to go". Link frowned.

"Does she know I'm here?"

"Uh huh. She didn't know you were coming then she saw you and then she left." Link knew that Tracy had left because he turned up, he just didn't know why.

"What did she say?"

"Think of something believable; tell them I said itâ€|Oh I wasn't supposed toâ€|I mean it's probably nothing." Link couldn't enjoy himself, even Inez's showing off couldn't get a smile. He even snapped at her when she splashed him earning himself a look from her older brother.

Tracy got home and made her excuses to her parents before going to her room and looking in her vanity mirror again. She saw the swimsuits straps digging into the flesh of her shoulders, the bulges under her arms, her stomach, thighs—the one possibly redeeming feature she supposed would be that all her curves were bigger than normal. Being fat and flat-chested would probably have meant she died an old maid. She mentally slapped herself; Link didn't kiss her because she had boobs. If he was as shallow as that he'd still be with Amber. Link was sweet and wanted her just the way she was—probably, maybe. Ugh. There was no maybe about it. It was the swimsuit it was making her crazy, depriving her brain of oxygen. It wasn't years of being either ignored or picked on by boys that made her doubt her attractiveness; it was her swimming costume causing cerebral hypoxia. Tracy nearly had herself convinced. She changed into her normal clothes, normal, figure-hiding, safe clothes and threw the offending item to the back of her closet behind the pink dress and black and white dress that she would probably never find occasion to wear again.

Link had managed to keep himself in the water for about half an hour before finally telling Seaweed and Penny that he was going, they both knew he probably be going straight to Tracy's, Penny bit her lip to keep herself from telling him about the Monstro incident. Maybe if he knew then he could talk to Tracy and—but Tracy might never forgive her. She kept quiet and watched as Link made his way to the changing rooms not even attempting the confident and graceful stride he was known for.

Knowing that doing his hair from scratch would take more time than he was willing to spend on it Link just dried it and let it fall however, not caring that the Ultra Clutch residue made it look like he was connected to a small electric current. He was hoping that Tracy would answer the door all smiles and tell him that it was a silly misunderstanding but unfortunately it was her mother that answered the door.

"Oh hello dear—goodness what happened to your head?" He ignored that comment knowing he didn't look his best.

"Is Tracy in?" Edna picked up on the urgency in Link's voice.

"Did something happen?"

"I don't know."

"She's in but she's been awful quiet, come on up. You might as well stay for dinner, we're having pork."

"My favourite." He can't quite summon his charm smile she nods and lets him in, knocking on Tracy's door when they get to the hallway.

"Tracy?"

"What!?"

"Tracy don't talk to your mother like that." Wilbur called from the living room.

"Yes daddy." Came the muffled reply. Tracy opened her door. "Sorry

mama€|Link?"

"You have a visitor Tracy."

"I noticed." She saw Link's serious expression and mutely opened her bedroom door wider to let him in.

"Oh I don't think so. No offence Link but there is no way that I am letting a seventeen year crooner be alone with my daughter in her bedroom. If you two don't want to talk in the living room there's a perfectly good yard outside." Edna said remembering when she and Wilbur had been alone in the yard. They went outside and just looked at each other. About a minute after the silence became uncomfortable Tracy said the first thing that came into her head.

"I have some ultra clutch and a comb if you want to borrow them." Link chuckled as he looked at the ground and ran a hand through his hair. Why was finding the right words so damned hard. He'd been so careful about what he said to her because he didn't want to hurt her accidentally like he had done with his thoughtless words that night at the record shop but now the words had almost dried up completely.

"Believe it or not darlin but hairspray isn't high on my list of priorities right now."

"Better not let Corney hear you say that."

"Tracy why did you come home from the pool when you found out I was there? You didn't even leave the changing rooms." He ran his hand through his hair, a nervous gesture he'd conquered as soon as he became a regular on the show, it was bad for the 'do'. "Was it something I did, something I didn't do?"

"Link no€|it's nothing like that."

"Then what is it Tracy?" This wasn't good. He'd called her Tracy twice. He usually called her Trace or doll, darlin or something similar. "If I haven't done anything to upset you why would me being at the pool make you leave?"

"It wasn't you€|it was me, I changed my mind. I came home."

"The fact that you changed your mind when you knew that it wasn't just you, Penny and Inez anymore was a coincidence?" He was so close to figuring it out but nobody who looked like he did, who had hundreds of screaming female fans, would ever be able to imagine being scared to be seen. Even stood in a yard full of washing, her mother's plus size dresses and some of her own skirts€|thankfully no underwear, Link didn't get it. "Tracy€|" Ouch, three times in one conversation. He held her head gently in his hands. "I don't mean to get mad but€|darlin the thought of you upset, especially because of me, does things to my insides€|painful things." She puts one of her hands on top of one of his hands and then his lips are on hers.

Tracy felt her heart skip a beat as Link tentatively and lightly drew his tongue across her lips. It took a few seconds for it to register in his brain but she'd definitely responded, he hadn't dreamt that slight brush of her tongue against his lips, reciprocating and

raising his pulse significantly. Link took a chance and slowly opened his mouth a little bit more, gently pushing his tongue a little farther into her mouth and flicking it against hers. She returned every move he made with less and less trepidation than the move before, each caress got more confident. God she was making him crazy, it had never been like this before. Link's hands slid down her back not quite touching her derriere, one of her hands was entwined in his hair, the other gripped his bicep.

As they parted and the world rushed back, all the insecurity and doubt resurfaced within her mind and Tracy was overcome with embarrassment for her somewhat enthusiastic response to, wait for it—Link's tongue in her mouth! She'd probably convinced Link she was fast or loose like Brenda, the ex council member who at just seventeen took a leave of absence from the public eye, a very conspicuous nine month leave of absence. She froze making Link wonder anew what he could have done to offend her.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing." Tracy was trying for a bright smile but it was about as convincing as her 'it's fine' had been when he had seen the tears in her eyes.

"Trace I was born at night not last night." His voice was soft but she could tell he was getting frustrated, she knew the feeling.

"I don't know what else to tell you." The truth was way too embarrassing and she won't lie to him. "You don't understand."

"And I never will if you don't tell me."

****Well this is one time, this is one time****

****That you can't fake it hard enough to please everyone****

****Or anyone at all.****

****And the place that you refuse to leave****

****The refuge that you've built to flee****

****The places that you've come to fear the most****

****Is the place that you have come to fear the most.****

"Tracy, Link—your pork is ready." Saved by the pig, Tracy thought—the food not her mother.

"We should go in." Link sighs and follows Tracy as she heads inside, knowing that what she isn't saying is almost definitely important. He felt, with worrying certainty, that whatever she wasn't telling him was going to come back and bite him in the ass.

After some stilted dinner conversation Edna asked if Link had any schoolwork to do because she knew Tracy had. He said something vague about needing to go home and Tracy walked him out. They didn't talk until they were both stood outside.

"If you're not telling me because I didn't march—" It was the one

idea that made sense, that Tracy wasn't telling him because he let her down.

"It's not the march, it'sâ€¦I've got some straightening out to do. It's not your fault and it's not something you can help with. I need to do this on my own." Link felt like he'd been punched in the stomach, she didn't need him. He'd known that he had been selfish and superficial before he got to know Tracy but couldn't she see that he'd changed, that knowing her had changed him for the better?

"I guess I'll see you in the morning then." He said dully and pressed a quick kiss to her cheek, getting in his car and driving off without giving her a chance to reply. Link drove in silence, a rarity for someone who loved music like he did. The memory of Tracy's lips, her tongue tentatively touching his, was buried underneath all the confusion and worry. He had French-kissed his girlfriend for the first time, he should have been happy but he was driving home in his black Caddy under a blacker cloud.

****Buried deep as you can dig inside yourself****

****And hidden in the public eye****

****Such a stellar monument to loneliness****

****Laced with brilliant smiles and shining eyes, perfect hairdo****

****But you're barely scraping by, but you're barely scraping by.****

Sitting on her bed Tracy tried to do some of that straightening out she'd mentioned. After staring at her ceiling for more than an hour she knew the following things:

She loved Link

She was very attracted to him

She was worried that wanting to act on her feelings was wrong

She was worried about what he thought of her body

She was worried about how deep his feelings for her were

She was not the type of girl Link dated in the past

She was the most ridiculed girl in school.

Tracy rolled over on her bed, trying to make some sort of sense of all the conflicting feelings she had, and brought the twenty or so pictures of Link around her mirror directly into her eye line. Link's smile surrounded her, his perfect white teeth, his lipsâ€¦lips that had kissed her just a short while agoâ€¦kissed her with tongue, all the feelings crashed together and swirled within her mind. She was drowning in her emotions and life jackets didn't come in her size.

****Well this is one time, this is one time****

****That you can't fake it hard enough to please everyone****

****Or anyone at all****

****And the place that you refuse to leave****

****The refuge that you've built to flee****

****The places that you've come to fear the most****

****Is the place that you have come to fear the most.****

*** * ***

>AN: Sweat Hog is a sixties term for an overweight woman, according to the internet anyway. It's quite possibly the most offensive term I've ever heard for us tree sized girls and if I heard anybody calling me that I'd show them what watching all seven seasons of Buffy the Vampire slayer had taught me. -Kicking Ass is Comfort Food- **

****A/N 2: This was the first proper graphic snogging (French kissing) scene I've ever written, I'm not sure how good it wasâ€| what did you think?****

****A/N 3: 51 reviews and 2001 hitsâ€|omfg. I must be doing something right ;)****

****A/N 4: in case anybody was wondering about my inspiration for this story arc, I haven't been swimming in five years and the last time was in another country, i.e. where nobody other than my family was ever going to see me again. I don't normally care what people think but the thought of swimwear makes me break out in a cold sweat. If you want to see my inspiration for Tracy's reaction...i.e. Zac Efron topless google 'Zac Efron Hawaii' in the images section...ohh Vanessa you lucky girl!****

6. Chapter 6 Girl Talk, Guy Talk

For Nonna who writes the longest, most brilliant reviews and sends me Zac Efron videos and everyone else who writes the amazing reviews I've been getting. You guys are the reason I update so often.

It Takes Two - Tracy sings in ****Bold**** Penny in Italics both singing ****Bold Italics****. (It Takes Two was the song Link was singing just before Tracy found out about the audition. Listen to the song if you can, it's so sweet. I'm pretty sure you can waltz to it; it's got a ¾ time signature anyway, i.e. three beats to a bar. Either way the chapter's written now and I liked the idea of Penny and Tracy waltzing through the school.)

I Can Hear the Bells - Link sings in ****Bold**** Seaweed in Italics both singing ****Bold Italics****

*** * ***

>Girl Talk, Guy Talk<p><p>

-Wednesday 13th-

After an awkward couple of days, Tracy and Link were just beginning to put Sunday behind them. They ate lunch together as usual, on the bleachers with Penny and Seaweed, as usual and held hands as usual but as reassuring as the preservation of routine was, holding hands wasn't half as nice as it had been before Sunday. Hearing the call of nature Tracy let go of Link's hand and stood.

"I'll be right back." Tracy went back into the main building of the school and into the ladies' restroom. Just before she unlocked the door to her stall she heard some annoyingly familiar voices enter, Amber and her entourage.

"What you must be going through. I still can't believe he chose that warthog over you." That was Tammy who had complimented her on her black and white dress, seeming sincere—the two faced little tramp.

"Even before you took the reins and polished him up, he was never this—misguided." Lou Ann had asked Tracy who taught her to dance and had been genuinely impressed when Tracy had just said her mama.

"Even in junior high he had taste, I've never seen him with a girl who wasn't beautiful and you're not just beautiful you're—Amber Von Tussle." Vicki had always been the most sycophantic of all Amber's little lackeys so this vomit-inducing sentence didn't come as much of a surprise.

"I was going to end it anyway." 'You liar!' Tracy thought, remembering how several people had mentioned the look on Amber's face when Link had started dancing with her, including her mother who wouldn't lie. "He said that giving me his ring was the last step before going all the way and that by prom he hoped I'd be giving him something." That didn't sound anything like the Link Tracy knew. It didn't even sound like the Link other people knew just from watching the show. "I said I hoped he meant senior prom. I have given him more than enough, so much more than he deserves." Tracy doubted the second part was true but the first had her worried. How was she going to compare with Amber if or when—he might not mean to but Link would automatically be comparing her with his previous girlfriends. There was no way she would come out of any comparison looking good.

"There's no wonder he went with that great white whale, with that pathetic little crush she'd had on him he had to know she'd put out, especially if he takes her to prom." That was not why Link was with her, he cared about her. Tracy wasn't quite sure how much, but she did know he wasn't just in it for—that. If that was the sort of person he was he could have chosen any of his hundreds of fans or one of the few good time girls on the show.

"I bet he thinks she's a sure thing." Tracy's hands had become tightly clenched fists, she kept imagine what it would be like to go out there and tell each and every one of them exactly what she thought about them, the more she thought about it the more it sounded like a good idea.

"Then again she's never had a boyfriend and he's cute so he might be

rightâ€¦it would serve him right if he saw her and screamed. I know I would." They tittered viciously. "Do you think he's upgraded the suspension on his hearse?" More giggles at her expense. It was hardly the first time she'd heard mean things said about her but she was so angry she could taste bile in the back of her throat.

"It wouldn't happen even if she wanted it to," Tammy began, "She'd get in the back seat and there'd be no room left for him."

"I heard her parents bought her a double bed because she got too wide for a twinâ€¦in grade school!"

"What do you think she'll be wearing for prom?"

"I hope she wears the pink monstrosity I saw her in once. It was cheap and shiny and her mother had a dress in the same god-awful fabric, mother said they'd stop traffic." Tracy felt herself coming close to snapping, she always stood up for her family even when she didn't stand up for herself.

"How is your mother?"

"She's fabulous. All her interviews at the other stations have gone really well but she's waiting for the right offer." Tracy smiled, Velma's little stunt had made it on to the local news. She was never working in television again. "Only the best for the Von Tusslesâ€¦not that she needs to work, daddy left us fabulously wealthy."

"I heard the Turnblads are broke because her freak of a father bailed out all those Negroes." How stupid were those girls? Her father would be getting the money back when everybody went to court. Tracy herself had got off with an unofficial caution to not hit police officers again. The chief of police's daughter was a big fan of the show; Tracy assumed that had worked in her favour.

"Link is going to be sorry he started associating with riff-raff. I wouldn't be surprised if he came crawling back to me after he gets what he wants from the Incredible Hulk." Amber had hit the mark with that one. Tracy was afraid Link would change his mind about her, that at some point he'd decide that he couldn't be her boyfriend anymore and leave her for someone who was more attractive.

"You'd take him back?"

"God no. He's kissed Tracy, do I look like the kind of girl who wants to get cootiesâ€¦I'm not having anything of that boyfriend stealing mammoth's near me, including Link." It suddenly became obvious how immature Amber was. Cooties weren't even realâ€¦Tracy then remembered Seaweed Duane and Germaine singing 'Baltimore Crabs' and smiled. The sound of aerosols meant that they were doing their final hair check after touching up their make-up. They'd be going soon, thank god.

"Oh look it's the checkerboard chick," Shelley sneered. Penny! Oh no, did Link ask her friend to go looking for her?

"Oh hey Shelley. I was just wondering where Tracy was, have any of you plastic spastics seen her?" Penny said brightly as if she was unaware that she was insulting them.

"I think we'd have noticed her don't you?" This poisonous barb came, of course, from Amber and Tracy rolled her eyes at the blonde's stupidity.

"Ok I'll keep looking." Penny went to leave then turned back to the ring leader of the bigoted little circus. "Say has your friend Brenda worked out who the father of her baby is? I heard there's a long list to work through." Bo Peep huffed and walked out with all her little sheep following her. "Tracy?" Tracy unlocked the door and came out.

"Penny you were amazingâ€|how much did you hear?"

"Enough to forget what Seaweed's mom says about peaceful protest."

"You're the best." Penny smiled but it was replaced one second later by a frown.

"You aren't going to go home again are youâ€|because of what they said?"

"No. I just need to imagine hitting Amber for a bit longer."

"Tracy she's poison, don't listen what she's saying, to what anybody's saying."

"I'm used to it Penny, people around here have been being saying mean things about me since they learned to talk." A troubling thought occurred to her. "You don't think Link is listening to what people are saying do you?"

"Haven't you talked about it?" Tracy sighed.

"We don't really do all that much talking." An exaggerated look of shock appeared on Penny's face.

"Tracy!"

"I meant that we're always with other peopleâ€|he hasn't even asked me out on a date."

"You know he likes you."

"It would help if he told me that."

"He kissed you, on TV. Why would he do that if he didn't have feelings for you?" The fact that Tracy could think of no good reason that Link would do that did something to alleviate her worries. It had been a very nice kiss, so had the one they'd had in the middle of the incredibly tense conversation in her yard.

"Pennyâ€|how far have you gone with Seaweed?" Tracy asked quietly, Penny had told her that Seaweed had muscles in certain places and could do things with his tongue thatâ€|well Tracy didn't really want to think about it, but they had never gotten down to naming a base number. Penny went as red as her lollipop.

"Tracy Turnblad! Mind your own business." Penny checked that there was nobody else around. "Second base...well first and a half, maybe

three-quarters." Penny's blush deepened. "He's justâ€|Seaweed."

"Was it awkward?"

"You know when you get to the top of a rollercoaster and you see how high up you are and how steep the drop is? Well for a second it was like that."

"Then what?" Tracy was intrigued by Penny's reaction to the questionâ€|if Penny felt similar rushes of heat with Seaweed then maybe how she felt was normal, she wasn't turning into some kind of crazed addict.

"Then he looked me in the eyes and asked if it was ok, I kissed him andâ€|boy that was a fun ride." It was Tracy's turn to blush.

"I don't think I'll be getting on that ride for a while." Penny shrugged.

"Up to you."

"What if I want to, get onâ€|and Link doesn't? It's not like he knows what I really look like. These clothes are about as tailored as a potato sack."

"Maybe you need a makeover, it might make you feel better, or maybeâ€|you should just talk to him."

"And let him know I'm a paranoid mess?"

"Tracy he's not going to break up with you over how you look, he wants to be with you." Intellectually, Tracy knew that. Believing it was what she was having trouble with. Penny decided she was going to have to pull out all the stops if she was going to stop her friend from doubting herself and sabotaging her first relationship.

_I know it's a man's world _

And it cannot be denied

But what good's a man's world

Without a woman by his side

****I can't lose weight****

And me and Seaweed will not hide

'_**Cause they're our men and we're their girls**_

****If they're the oceans we're the pearls****

It takes two Trace and Link wants you

Penny pulled her friend out of the bathroom, now that Tracy was happier and singing Penny wanted to get back to Seaweed. Tracy had other ideas and began leading Penny in a waltz down the corridor. Penny just went with it, when Tracy got going it was best just to ride it out.

**A king ain't a king **

**Without the power behind the throne **

_A prince is a pauper, girl, _

_Without a princess of his own _

**So we'll never leave them **

**We don't wanna be alone **

_Tell him, he's your king _

_And you're his queen _

_That __**no one else can come between**_

It takes two Trace and, Link wants you

**Lancelot had Guinevere **

_Mrs. Claus has old St. Nick _

**Romeo had Juliet **

**And Liz, well, she has her dick**

Laughing at their pun the girls twirled out of the building into the sunshine pausing to blow kisses in the direction of the bleachers knowing it was very unlikely that they'd be seen.

**They say it takes two to tango **

**Well, that tango's child's play **

**They'll lead us to the dance floor **

**And we'll twist the night away **

_Ignore what the others say _

_You're the one that Link holds dear _

_Don't give them the time of day _

_Unless you kick their ass severe _

_Link just wants you Tracy _

You've got nothing left to fear

_Now you're his girl and he's your boy _

**It's not something they can destroy **

'_**Cause love is grand e**__**njoy the ride **_

_He'll be the groom if you'll be his bride _

_**It takes two**__, Tracy __**It takes two**_

_**It takes two**__ Trace and Link wants youâ€¦|_

Smiling and linking their arms the two best friends began walking slowly back to the bleachers, Tracy sharing some small details about her and Link with Penny who was genuinely pleased for her friend.

Seaweed grinned as they made fools of themselves. Link was also smiling because Tracy was her usual self again, singing and dancing and not caring what people thought of her. When the girls blew the two of them kisses from their position across the football field, Link felt his heart give an almighty _thump_, Seaweed was also experiencing some of the cardiac symptoms of love. They heard something that sounded vaguely likeâ€¦|

I can hear the bells Well don'tcha hear them chime?

_Can't 'cha hear my heartbeat keeping perfect time? _

And all because she loves me **she looked at me and stared,**

She admired me, **and **_**I was unprepared**_

_When she chose me and knocked me off my feet _

One little dance now my life's complete

She was in trouble it put me in a fix

_Yes__**love hit me just like a ton of bricks,**_

**Never felt worse now I know what life's about **

**That stupid cop said she'd knocked him out... **

**I can hear the bells**** my head is spinning **

_**I can hear the bells**__ I can't stop grinning _

**Everybody says that a guy who looks like me **

**Won't stay with her well, just wait and see**

**'Cause I can hear the bells just hear them chiming **

_I can hear the bells my temperature's climbing _

_**Don't tell me that I'm wrong 'Cause I finally found the one
**_

**I've been missin' Listen! I can hear the bells**

Round one 'there's hotter girls to date' and then

Round two the daily dose of hate **hold on**

**Round three's when we kiss inside the car**

Won't go all the way _but she'll go pretty far!_
Round four my dad** can't understand**
Round five her mom tried to get me canned
Round six **Amber much to your dismay**
**These unlikely girls are who make our day**
_I can hear the bells my ears are ringing _
**I can hear the bells and I feel like singing **
_Everybody says it's a case of us and them _
They don't understand **_they just cause mayhem**_
I can hear the bells **it'll take a while**
I can hear the bells **for folks to see us and smile **
_Her mom wants me to die but I don't care 'cause _
_**She and I a**__**re French kissin'! Listen! I can hear the bells
**_
_I can hear the bells my head is reeling _
**I can hear the bells I can't stop the feeling **
**Everybody says that they don't like what they see **
**And I wish that they'd look inside of me yeah, **
_**I can hear the bells**__ today's just the start_
**'Cause I can hear the bells**** And 'til death do us part
**_
_**And even when we die we'll look down from up above
**_
**Remembering the night that we two fell in love **
**Weâ€|she will shed a tear **
'**Cause I'll whisper**_** as we're reminiscin' **_
**Listen! I can hear the bells I can hear the bells **
**I can hear the bells I can hear the bells**

Sighing happily Link put his feet up on the seat and looked at his newest and, if he was brutally honest, only real friend.

"You're so whipped."

"I'm not the only one cracker boy and I wasn't singing no wedding

vows." Seaweed said smiling, making his companion look away to hide the slight blush that he would never admit to.

"It rhymed." He said, trying to sound cool and not embarrassed at all.

"Yeah whatever you say." Came the reply. "The only person who don't know you love Tracy is Tracy." Ignoring the reminder that he hadn't told Tracy how he felt about her, because whenever he came close he seemed to lose his ability to form a coherent sentence. He turned the question around on Seaweed.

"Well what about you and Penny?"

"I told her when I was freeing her and Tracy from Penny's bent mother. She had Penny tied to a bed and Tracy locked in the basement. Crazy old witch."

"Tracy was locked in a basement?" While he'd been serenading her photo and eating her mother's expertly cooked pork Tracy had been locked up by the local loony? He felt like an ass for not going out and looking for her when he'd had the chance.

"Not for long. She got in the trunk of Duane's car and then we drove to my house." Just when Link thought he couldn't feel worse.

"She was in theâ€|are you trying to make me feel like scum because I wasn't there? I don't need the help believe me." Seaweed took in his expression, he did look genuinely sorry.

"Just making sure you know what kind of girl you've got, what she'll do for other peopleâ€|you're alright Larkin, but if you mess Tracy around we'll be having words." Link couldn't help notice the ominous tone in his friend's voice. Had the girls not been seconds away from joining them he would have reassured Seaweed. The last thing Link wanted in the whole world was to see Tracy hurting...Yet he couldn't seem to keep it from happening.

Sorry about the update being a little later than usual but I had some furniture moving to do and my landlady came over with her sons and husband and then when they left the internet stopped working it's all been very frustrating. I would much rather have been putting myself in Tracy's shoes (Imagining kissing Link heehee...no it wouldn't be cradle snatching Zac's only 6 months younger than me!) and writing more of this little story people seem to like so muchâ€|

When I go to write Link more often than not it comes out kink, do you think it's just me trying to type too quickly or is it a subconscious Freudian slip thingâ€|answers in on a postcard to the little button at the bottom of your screen lol.

Needless to say I'm starting on the next chapter straight awayâ€|I already have 900 words done so it might even go up todayâ€|ooh you lucky peopleâ€|the next chapter's going to be a crucially important Trink-festâ€|I can't wait and I know how it turns out!

7. Chapter 7 I Can't Help Falling In Love

I'm not entirely happy with this and would welcome suggestions but I don't care how many of you beg and plead I am not making any plot changing alterations. :)

* * *

>I Can't Help Falling in Love with You<p><p>

-Later that day-

"And we're off. Good job kids. See you tomorrow." Corney said to the dispersing teenagers. "Seaweed can I have a word?" Seaweed glanced at Link who was stood next to him, he shrugged unhelpfully. "I'm not gonna bite." Seaweed went over to find out what Corney wanted now he knew it was nothing bad. "Next Thursday I'm hosting your junior prom, normally I'd just ask Link to sing a couple of songs but I want you up on stage representing the show as well. What do you say?"

"It won't take up the whole night will it?"

"You'll have plenty of time left over to spend with Penny if that's what you're worried about." Seaweed grinned, it was an honour to be so singled out, his momma was going to be so proud. Seeing her walking off to her new dressing room he planned to run and tell her ASAP.

"I'm there. Thanks."

"You earned it."

Link had completely forgotten that he had agreed to sing at prom but that wasn't at the forefront of his mind, his first thought on remembering that the dance was only eight days away was that he hadn't even asked Tracy yetâ€|but he would before he dropped her off at her house. He couldn't see Tracy on set but he found her in a corridor that led further into the building, practising one of the more complicated of the new dances, she hadn't heard or seen him coming. He hugged her from behind, unintentionally brushing the underneath of her bust with the sides of his thumbs. Tracy stiffened at the unexpected contact, her treacherous brain telling her he was trying to cop a feel because every time she breathed she moved against his hands.

"You were great today darlin." She danced well every day but he felt like telling her, mostly because of lunchtime and the kiss she'd blown at him. Link was well aware of the accidental contact and although he hadn't planned it and his heart rate increased with every breath she took, he thought that removing his arms from around her for no good reason might damage the fragile peace that had descended since lunch. His kissed the spot just under her ear than managed to be both neck and cheek. Tracy let out a sigh at the feel of his soft lips against her skin, before turning to give him a smileâ€|a smile, Link thought, that was begging for a kiss. It wasn't long before Tracy felt the unmistakable touch of Link's tongue and parted her lips automatically. Neither of them heard the rhythmic clacking of heels getting closer.

"Oh my god!" Amber said with disgust in her voice. "Excuse me while I vomit." Tracy pulled away immediately; embarrassed at being caught making out, especially by Link's perfect-looking ex. Link kept an arm around Tracy well aware of what Amber thought of her. Amber's gaze flicked to Tracy before looking at Link. "Well I suppose you have to practise on somebody," she said to Link before dismissing him and turning on Tracy, "but really Tracy, and I'm telling you this as a friend."

"I doubt that," Link muttered under his breath, Amber wasn't a friend to anybody but Amber.

"As a friendâ€|that dating is like dancing, some people are just plain hopeless no matter how much practise they have." Tracy smiled, dancing was the one thing everybody knew she had Amber beat at.

"I guess that means that who you partner makes a difference." Amber was stumped, she had introduced the dancing analogy and Tracy had turned it against her, and damn her she was right, not that Amber was going to tell her that. Link's expression didn't change but he gave Tracy a supportive squeeze.

"Wellâ€|how would you know?"

"You said dating's like dancingâ€|I'm a good dancer and a quick study."

"Yeah, unless you're in a classroomâ€|are you going into Special Ed yet?" As well as Tracy could fight her own battles there was a point at which he was always going to step in and defend Tracy. Amber had just reached that point.

"Flake off Amber." Link said startling her. He had never been so rude before, she always knew that Tracy wasn't civilised but Link had always been respectable. His ex had never looked so angry at him and he really didn't give a damn, she turned on her heel and walked out. Tracy sighed again but her face took on a look of defeat.

"Soon Amber won't be teasing me about going_ into_ Special Ed, she'll tease me about being _in _Special Ed."

"I'll tutor you."

"You?" Tracy looked at him dubiously, he'd really do that for her, tutor her in virtually every subject?

"Darlin I'm sitting pretty on a 3.4 GPAâ€|I think I can stand coming to your house every day after school and helping you with your homework while I do mine." Tracy smiled, he was so sweet.

"You just want my mama to keep feeding you." She joked.

"Yesâ€|" Link said leaning in to kiss her again, "â€|your mother's cooking is the only reason I'm dating you." She felt his smile against her lips before he began the serious task of kissing her until she wasn't sure where she ended and he began. As his tongue teased hers his hand began to creep slowly up from her waist. Tracy panicked, thinking that not only was Link trying for second base, but that he was doing it in public. She pulled away with no warning.

"Trace?" Not wanting to get into their awkward Sunday afternoon yard conversation, Tracy said the first thing that came into her head.

"I heard something." They were still just inches apart when Corney Collins came around the corner with an umbrella, making what Tracy said seem like the truth, which it really hadn't been.

"What are you two kids still doing here? I'm all for young love but there's gotta be some where more romantic to play tonsil tennis than here." Tracy went bright red at Corney's correct assumption. Did he think she was all over Link at every opportunityâ€|if only a small voice said, not the voice that brought her down, this voice was new. If it was possible her blush intensified. Corney hadn't intended to embarrass her and as he saw that he had he decided to make it up to her. "It's pouring it down outside. I'll keep you company while Link gets his car. We can't have Tracy Turnblad walking around with a drenched 'do'. What would Mr Spritzer say?" Link took the hint and went to fetch his Caddy. "So next Thursday's going to be a great night huh Tracy?" Seeing the look on Tracy's face he paused to take his foot out of his mouth. "I'm sure he's going to ask you soonâ€|you could even take a stand for women's lib and do the asking yourself."

"I don't mind if he doesn't ask me. It's not like I've never danced with him beforeâ€|it's only prom." Tracy was lying through her teeth, she cared about prom, she cared that nobody had ever asked her and that she'd never been. Neither had Penny, but Penny had chosen to spend the night of every formal with her watching movies and eating Mrs Turnblad's delicious experiments with chocolate.

"Tracy, prom's the most important school night of the year. I remember my junior prom, I took Sarah Smith in my dad's 'Woody Wagon' and weâ€|" he stopped remembering that he was talking to a young lady, "well I've never been able to hear that phrase without smiling since. You'll have a blast at prom Tracy." Tracy swallowed audibly, was everybody assuming she and Link were moving at the speed of light? The familiar sound of the Caddy's horn disrupted her worrying thoughts. "C'mon Tracy I'll walk you out." Corney opened the door and put up his umbrella shielding his favourite council member from the rain until was in Link's car.

Nobody really knew why Corny Collins' favourite dancer was Tracy, they all assumed it was because, aside from Little Inez, she was the best and most popular. The truth of the matter was, up until the age of fourteen he had been a similar size. He hadn't had the courage she had to go for her dream regardless of what people thought, it had taken two very hard years to change from a guy the size of a football field to someone who wouldn't look out of place on the team. He hadn't looked back until he saw Tracy dancing to Ladies Choice and decided to help her achieve her dream while staying exactly as she was. If it looked like she needed to hear it, he'd tell her about it but unless something happened that made Tracy feel like she wasn't good enough; his surrender to peer pressure would remain his secretâ€|unless Maybelle drew it out of him. That woman made him do some pretty crazy thingsâ€|like suggesting integration and that she should be made co-host.

Tracy got in the car and tried to ignore the creeping feeling of dread that Corney's prom night story had caused. He had implied that prom normally involved ye godsâ€|third base. In no way shape or form

was she ready to touch Link's to do that. She couldn't even let him see her in swimwear for Pete's sake, second base had her freaked out, third was third base was scary. The drive was spent in comfortable silence as they listened to the radio and let the adrenaline of live television and making out fade away. Link turned up the radio when he heard the unforgettable voice of Elvis.

****Wise men say, only fools rush in****

****But I can't help, falling in love with you****

****Shall I stay, would it be a sin****

****If I can't help, falling in love with you****

It had only been a couple of months since Tracy began dancing on the show and only eleven days since he and Tracy got together but Link was so sure he loved her. He couldn't imagine his life without her in it and had to repress a shudder at the mere thought of it. Link had liked Tracy for weeks but it wasn't until he realised that she was in trouble because he'd been selfish that the depth of his feelings had hit him. Stood in her bedroom after midnight while she was out there potentially alone and hurt, love had hit him like a bullet fired a point-blank range. He'd been able to tell her picture how he felt, he'd serenaded it, but Link Larkin, reputed Romeo, relied on other people's songs and kisses to let her know he cared.

****Like a river flows, surely to the sea****

****Darling so it goes, some things are meant to be****

****Take my hand, take my whole life too****

****For I can't help, falling in love with you****

Being with Tracy felt right, he felt at home with her in a way that he never had with any of his previous girlfriends, her house, with Mrs Turnblad who had gotten over his initial wink treated him like family was more welcoming than his own, his father spent most of his time at work or on dates with a series of women who he never got serious with, who never even came close to replacing his mother. Even the studio was more welcoming than his empty house.

****Like a river flows, surely to the sea****

****Darling so it goes, some things are meant to be****

****Take my hand, take my whole life too****

****For I can't help, falling in love with you****

****For I can't help, falling in love with you****

Link felt, with increasing certainty, that Tracy would be the love of his life. It was a crazy notion to have after so short a time but if he looked into his future he didn't see a career in music or college, when he looked into his future all he saw was the amazing girl sat on his right the girl that he had to ask to the prom, now. He turned the radio off and pulled the car over when there was somewhere safe to stop, just past the halfway point to her house where they were

expected for dinner.

"Link is somethingâ€|?" He took her hand and looked her in the eyes, his eyes, the pale blue of a summer sky seen through a wisp of cloud, seemed to look straight through her regular brown ones and see straight into her. It was a veryâ€|intimate gaze.

"Trace will you go to the prom with me?" Time seemed to stop for Tracy Edna Turnblad as her brain struggled to form a thought.

Link, prom, prom, Link, woody wagon, Link, third base, 'you have to practise on somebody', Link copping a feel, 'what can he possibly see in her', 'who'd have those thoughts and feelings about you Tracy Turnblad', 'he doesn't feel that way about you Tracy, nobody could', prom, third base, half naked Link, the swimming costume, 'you don't understand' 'and I never will if you don't tell me', 'I've got some straightening out to do', 'I've never seen him with a girl who wasn't beautiful', 'it would serve him right if he saw her and screamed', 'I just think this adventure's a little too big for me'.

Tracy wasn't saying anything. To say that it wasn't the reaction Link was expecting would be an understatement. He started to fill the silence with whatever came into his head.

"I hope I gave you enough time to find a dress, girls always seem to take ages finding the dress. You'll have to tell me the colour so I can buy a corsage for you. I was thinking that I could pick you up earlier and take you out for dinner, I'd have to ask your father but I think he'd say yes and then after the prom I know of somewhere we could go to be alone andâ€|"

Tracy blinked, finally coming back to the here and now. He knew somewhere they could go to be alone? Was he seriously expecting her toâ€|? No, that couldn't be it. He respected her far too muchâ€|and didn't love her nearly enough.

"I'm going to ask Amber for the ring back. I want to give it to you. I want you to be wearing it." She couldn't believe her ears. They'd been dating less than two weeks and he was talking about jewellery. If they carried on like this they'd be married with a baby and another on the way by graduation. It was too fast, it was too muchâ€|he was giving her everything she'd ever dreamed of but not giving her time to believe in any of it.

"You're going too fast, just stop. I can't think." Link saw her face, she looked completely bewildered.

"Darlin what are you saying?" Maybe if they slowed down, spent time together alone without being attached at the mouth or, god forbid any other body partâ€|then she could put the voices to rest and let herself be happy. If they slowed down maybe she'd start believing.

"No. Linkâ€|I can't go to the prom with youâ€|or wear Amber's old ring. I'm saying no."

* * *

>AN: Dun dun DUN! ****Cue the drums from the end of Eastenders (a UK soap)**

According to the site I'm using for sixties slang, flake off means 'go away' and a 'Woody Wagon' is a wood sided station wagon used to transport surfboards and surfers to and from the beach, I thought that I'd make it dirtyâ€|just because I could, and Corney's porky past came to me when I last saw the film. I saw them hug in the finale and he genuinely liked her, more than anybody else, more than he disliked Amber evenâ€|it got me thinking and this is the reason I came up with. Also I threw in a hint of Corney/Maybelle for hell of it.

I write this at my desk right in front of my bedroom window that has a brilliant view over my city, back yards houses and in the distance multi-story buildings and a half dozen cranesâ€|lovely, my point is I've been looking at the clear blue sky for twelve hours a day for the past few days and, no word of a lie, ZE has eyes like looking at a summer sky through a wispy cloud. It might sound like romantic crap but it is factually accurate romantic crap.

8. Chapter 8 Big Girls Don't Cry

****A/N:** Thanks for all your comments. A Hairspray Fanâ€|about the rising and falling drama thing, this chapter is the big release, everything that's been building since the beginning is going to come out; the emotional floodgates are going to open. Nic, I made Tracy insecure about her appearance where Link was concerned because let's face it, most men, especially the ones who could be with anybody, pick skinny women. If you were Tracy and you suddenly got the guy of your dreams wouldn't you worry that you weren't the girl of his dreams? And every woman no matter how beautiful she is, or how confident she seems, has insecurities about her appearance. This is her first real relationship and she doesn't know what the hell she's doing (for a better example of this watch Grey's Anatomy, Meredith is determined to ruin her relationship with Derek in a much more obvious wayâ€|at least I'm not making Tracy drown herself!) Either way my Tracy is how she is now and those of you who are missing confident Tracy are just going to have to wait for an unspecified length of time for her returnâ€|there that should make you feel better.**

****WARNING!!!** â€" ****_****You lot better have the fanfiction reading essentials I mentioned earlierâ€|i.e. chocolate a drink and some tissues.**_

* * *

>Big Girls Don't Cry<p><p>

Linkâ€|I can't go to the prom with youâ€|or wear Amber's old ring. I'm saying no.

He couldn't believe it, as egotistical as it might sound, girls didn't say no to himâ€|and Tracy wasn't just a girl, she was his girl. He loved herâ€|a feeling which apparently wasn't reciprocated. Link sat back in his seat looking straight ahead

"Why Trace?" She watched him stare through the window and tried to form an answer. "Do I at least get an explanation this time?" The words in her head vanished. It wasn't supposed to be this way. Why

had she made it so hard? "Oh, I remember.. you're ashamed to be seen out in public with me." For someone who had a GPA that was so much higher than hers he was being an idiot. Wasn't school and the studio public? Wasn't the corridor where he'd tried for second base public enough for him?

"I'm not." Link turned to face her.

"Then why did you leave the pool?" The more he pushed for an answer the less she felt inclined to give him one.

"I don't have to tell you everything."

"How about anything!" As much as Link had tried to control himself his frustration was obvious. "People who are together are supposed to talk to each other." Tracy knew that, but knowing it didn't make doing it any easier and being reminded of it was patronising.

"Throw it in my face why don't you?" Confusion replaced Link's frustration.

"What are you talking about? I don't-"

"The fact that I have no idea what to do, that you're Link Larkin local Romeo and television heartthrob and I'm just short stout Tracy Turnblad who had to wait seventeen years for a kiss." He'd been her first kiss? He found it hard to believe he was the first one to fall for her but guys could be so blind, it had taken him weeks to realise that the feelings he had for her weren't platonic. Now Tracy was accusing him of throwing her inexperience in her face like he was some sort of male Amber.

"Why do you always expect the worst of me?"

"Because the worst of people is all I get, when I expected you to do the right thing you chickened out and I thought you called me fat and then you ran away."

"I didn't mean it like that!" Link began but Tracy was on a roll, she couldn't stop and everything she'd been keeping to herself for the past week and a half came tumbling out of her mouth without thought.

"You cared more about singing and dancing and looking cool than what was right so forgive me for thinking you have expectations of prom night that I can't meet, that I won't meet. Can I rely on you to be supportive if I want to keep my clothes on or to not recoil in horror if they came off, because right now I have no idea." _I'm scared, I'm confused, I've been hurt, I'm insecure_ Tracy kept saying it over and over with different words but all Link heard was _I don't trust you. _He'd done everything he could think of to make her happy, took her to school, offered to tutor her, kissed her, hugged her, what more did she want from him? What more did he have left to give?

"Well if that's what you think of me then maybe we shouldn't go to the prom, maybe we shouldn't even be together." The words just came out. He hadn't meant it, he hadn't, but he'd said it and Tracy had heard it and that's what she believed. A solitary tear rolled down her cheek and dropped on to the upholstery. Seeing this softened

Link's expression immediately, he'd done it again. What was it people saidâ€|you always hurt the one you love.

"Maybe you're right." Her voice was thick with tears as she picked up her bag. "Maybe this adventure _was _too big for you after all." Link opened his mouth to say that it wasn't her size he had a problem with it was the fact that she didn't trust him but nothing came out. The car door shut as Tracy got out into the pouring rain, grateful for the fact that nobody on the street would see her tears. In the twenty seconds it had taken Link to realise that Tracy thought he wanted to break up and decide to go after her Tracy had vanished.

"Tracy!" The rain showed no sign of letting up as Link's 'do' instantly started to dissolve. Tracy heard his voice from alley she'd taken as a short cut home. Link turned around, there was no sign of her anywhere. "Damn it Tracy do you wanna walk home in this rain?!" She'd never heard him shout, much less curse before. Tracy would rather turn up at home looking like a drowned rat then spend one more second stuck in a car with her angry ex boyfriend. Her breath caught as she thought of Link as her ex. They'd been together eleven days and they hadn't been out on a single date because of how busy it was at the studio with the show being integrated the only time they'd had alone had been while he was driving them somewhere or the few minutes in her yard before her mother served dinner. Barely enough time for a decent kiss, barely a relationship at all. Link couldn't see her anywhere, was she even still in the area? What if she was already halfway home and he was wasting time shouting for someone who couldn't even hear him? Tracy started sobbing as she heard Link drive away. He hadn't even tried to look for her not really, he'd just run awayâ€|only this time she wasn't going to turn up in a new dress and have him make everything ok again by dancing with Little Inez, this time he wasn't coming back.

****The smell of your skin's fading from me now****

****Link don't hate me I need you around ****

****I need some space for my own protection baby****

****To be by myself and make up my mind, this is all on me****

It was all her fault, she should have just told him, Penny was right. If she'd just made them a couple of minutes late for Sunday lunch or just once not eaten lunch with Penny and Seaweed none of this would have happened. She still didn't know if Link understood. Had any of her verbal diarrhoea made sense to him?

****I hope you know, I hope you know ****

****That this is nothing to do with you ****

****It's personal, it's just that I ****

****I've got some straightenin' out to do ****

****And I'm gonna miss you like a child misses their blanket****

****But I've got to get a move on with my life ****

****It's time to be a big girl now and big girls don't cry ****

****Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry****

The tears were coming thick and fast, her sobs echoing in the empty alleys as her heart broke into a million jagged pieces. Why had she let herself sabotage what she'd been dreaming of for years? The answer came to her almost straight away; she'd never once believed that the dream would come true. When she got on the show the most she'd been hoping for was that he'd be her friend. Tracy had never understood what made Link kiss her. Sure she was a good friend and she stood up for what she believed in but what did Link see that every other guy in Baltimore had missed?

****The path that I'm walking, I must walk alone ****

****I must take the baby steps till I'm full grown, full grown.

****Fairytale don't always have a happy ending, do they? ****

****And I never wanted it to be this way****

For one shining moment she had felt like Cinderella, her friends had helped her get to the ball and Prince Charming kissed her then she'd managed to convince herself that he was going to work out, as everyone else had, that she was in fact an ugly step-sister. What the hell had happened to her? She had never cared about her appearance until she'd started dating, was getting close to someone really the cause of all her fears as she thought back to the pool and Link's hands and Corney's 'Woody Wagon' she had to admit that it freaked her out in a big way. she'd missed out on the seemingly innocent warm up to it during childhood. No boys had ever pulled on her pigtails then ran away, there had been no games of kiss-chase or prepubescent hand holding. When it came to love she'd been pushed into the deep end and, as she'd already worked out, life jackets didn't come in her size.

****I hope you know, I hope you know ****

****That this is nothing to do with you ****

****It's personal, it's just that I ****

****I've got some straightenin' out to do ****

****And I'm gonna miss you like a child misses their blanket****

****But I've got to get a move on with my life ****

****It's time to be a big girl now and big girls don't cry****

God she was going to miss him. He'd be at school and at the studio but he wouldn't want to spend any time with her, there'd be no more smiles or winks in her direction. It would be worse than when he didn't know she existed. Her old life had been fine when it was all she knew but going back to it while sharing Penny with Seaweed was going to be brutal.

****Like the racial hate in the school yard****

I let their words leave me scarred

I hurt my boyfriend and broke this heart of mine

Yes you can hold my hand if you want to

Cause that I know how to do

We were friends more than lovers I was so naïve

And it's time for me to go home **it's getting late, dark outside**

Tracy made her way home with her stringy hair sticking to her face, she couldn't spare the energy. It was taking everything she had just to keep putting one foot in front of the other. Seeing her house up ahead didn't make her feel better. Her parents were expecting a guest for dinner and she was turning up without him looking like she'd jumped in a pool with all her clothes on. She quickly poked her head into the shop.

"Hi daddy." She closed the door and went upstairs to where her mother was waiting.

"Dinner will be in fifteen minutes." Edna said coming out of the kitchen, "If you and Link don't want to sit in the living room keep your doorâ€|Tracy did Link not put the hood up on his car?" She took in her daughter's drenched appearance then noticed that their dinner party was a diner short. "Where is he?"

"He went home. Something came up." Tracy opened the door to her room and threw her bag on to her bed getting her sheets damp, she didn't care, she just wanted to lock herself away until graduation.

"What could be more important than dinner with you?" Tracy laughed, at that precise moment in time just about anything would be more important to Link than dinner with her. The bitterness in her laugh didn't escape her mother.

"Finding a new girlfriend." Tears leaked out and Edna went to hug her daughter but Tracy retreated into her room and shut the door.

"Tracyâ€|honeyâ€| "

"I don't want to talk about it! Leave me aloneâ€|" Edna had never had her daughter yell at her before, they'd always been so close, and she was so upset but she wanted to be aloneâ€|Edna didn't know what to do for the best.

"Wilbur! Wilbur something's happened to Tracy." Wilbur came up from behind the counter looking serious; there was nothing in the world more precious to him than his little girl. "They broke up andâ€|Wilbur I've never seen her so upset. It's worse than the last time she went swimming." They both remembered the day that Penny had brought their little girl home in tears and told them what happened, after Prudy had dragged Penny home it had taken Tracy another six hours to stop crying.

"It's that bad?"

"She shouted at me. I'm really worried about her but she said she wanted to be alone. She's heartbroken Wilbur. My baby girl has a broken heart and she won't let me help her." He hugged his wife trying to give her the comfort his daughter wouldn't let her give.

"Give her a bit of time on her own and then try again. She'll talk to you when she's ready."

"I hate seeing her unhappy."

"I know hon, me too."

Tracy got up off the floor and went over to her vanity table for a tissue. She managed to avoid looking at her reflection knowing she looked horrendous but she couldn't avoid seeing the many pictures of Link that formed a frame around her mirror. One by one she pulled them down and shoved them in the decorative keepsake box she'd got for her seventeenth birthday. When it came to the last picture, a palm sized newspaper cut out of his face she paused and sat on her bed holding it in her hand.

I need to be by myself and make up my mind this is all on me

**I hope you know, I hope you know **

**That this is nothing to do with you **

**It's personal, it's just that I **

**I've got some straightenin' out to do **

And I'm gonna miss you like a child misses their blanket

**But I've got to get a move on with my life **

**It's time to be a big girl now and big girls don't cry **

Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry.

After half an hour of watching Tracy's door for any sign of movement Edna Turnblad was beside herself with worry. She knocked on the door and when Tracy didn't tell her to go away she went straight in and gathered her daughter into her arms. Tracy dissolved into fresh tears as her mother hugged her.

"I was so stupid." She managed to say between sobs, "If I'd just talked to him instead ofâ€¦" Edna stroked her daughter's sticky hair then wiped her hand on her apron before rubbing Tracy's back. "He hates me now."

"Honey I'm sure that's not true."

"You didn't hear what I saidâ€¦I was afraid I liked him more than he liked me and now he isn't even going to be my friend." Tracy pulled away from her mother and wiped her face. "I'm going to take a shower."

"I'll warm up dinner later."

"Thanks." After her shower Tracy stood in front of her closet looking at her clothes. Shapeless, childish, safe, boringâ€¦ugly, there was no wonder she had self image issues wearing this stuff. She'd felt so much better when she was wearing that black and white dress with her hair down and hairspray free. She needed to change. She wasn't the deluded little girl with the big hair anymore. Tracy decided that, at seventeen, it was about damn time she acted like a grown woman. That meant getting a new wardrobe, which meant Mr Pinky was going to be thrilled. After she dressed in the outfit she'd word to the pageant Tracy left her room and went into the living room. "Mama can we go to the Hefty Hideaway?"

"Sure Tracy, whatever you want. I'll just get changed and we'll go, tell your father and I'll meet you downstairs."

Link had driven around the Tracy's neighbourhood making several wrong turns in his effort to find her. He'd gone back to his house when his stomach had made the fact that it was empty almost painfully clear. One barely edible meal, one shower, and one long half hour staring at himself in the mirror after doing his hair later Link grabbed his car keys and went back out and drove over to Tracy's house. Her father answered the door.

"Mr Larkin."

"I've come to see Tracy."

"You can't."

"Sir I want to apologiseâ€¦"

"She's not here. Even if she were here I wouldn't let you go up."

"Sir with all due respect you don't understandâ€¦"

"I don't need to. My little girl is more upset than we have ever seen her. When she was thirteen she went swimming and a boy called her Monstro. Six hours we sat with her while she sobbedâ€¦six hours after she got home she was still crying. She never went swimming again." Link felt like his blood had turned to ice as he suddenly understood why the pool had been such a big deal. "Whatever you did tonight hurt her more. So no, I don't understand. I don't understand how someone who was supposed to care for Tracy could hurt her like that."

"Sir Iâ€¦"

"Here's something you need to understand Mr Larkinâ€¦I'm not letting you near my daughter again." The door shut softly in Link's face. He went back to his car and sat in the driver's seat defeated. He turned on the radio trying to drown out the sound of his thoughts

****Like a river flows, surely to the sea****

****Darling so it goes, some things are meant to be****

****Take my hand, take my whole life too****

****For I can't help, falling in love with you****

****For I can't help, falling in love with you****

Hearing that song again made him feel even worse, not that he'd thought that was possible. Link turned off the radio and sat in silence, trying desperately not to cry.

* * *

>Wow...I was nearly crying as I read that back. What did you think? I thought it was better than the last chapter quality-wise. Once you've stopped crying review review review!!!

9. Chapter 9 why does it always rain on me?

****Over 7600 hits and 125 reviewsâ€|wowâ€|and also WOW. Thanks to everyone who took the extra few seconds to tell me what they thought. This chapter is for anyone who has ever dealt with a problem by spending an obscene amount of money.****

****Again thanks to Nonna aka writie for convincing me that this chapter wasn't completely rubbish. I know it's taken ages to post but I thought seeing as it's another long one, you might forgive me for being a little bit slower than normal.****

****In case anybody was wondering why I gave Tracy a new lookâ€|Tracy already had a new look in the finale, she had her hair down with shock, horror *_**no hairspray, *_** and she wore a short modern dress (i.e. early sixties style as opposed to late fifties style). I thought that going back to the big hair and bad clothes of the earlier scenes would be wrong because the new look was meant to be symbolise the changes that Tracy has gone throughâ€|well in my mind it was anyway, feel free to disagree. For the photo of Nikki that inspired Tracy's new look, go to fan forum. com and look for the Tracy/Link thread under couples, it's Zac and Nikki at some event to do with official Hairspray jewellery I think.****

****A Hairspray Fan; I appreciate the advice and I've taken it on board. I've come up with a couple of things to address the points you raised about pacing, repetition and Link. I hope they meet with your approval. :)****

****Nic: Now that two people have made the same comment I'm definitely going to do something about it, I do see where you're coming from and from now on Tracy should start changing, no more beating herself up about how she looks. The last thing I want is for anybody to lose sympathy for her.****

****I hope I don't offend anyone's literary sensibilities by still having her upset the day after the break-up.****

****Btw nobody is singing in this chapter, the song's just in there to set the mood.****

* * *

>Why Does It Always Rain On Me?<p><p>

Tracy had walked into the store with her mother and Mr Pinky immediately started fawning over them, when Tracy mentioned the words 'makeover' and 'new wardrobe' she could have sworn he started salivating. It had taken two hours and most of her wages but Tracy had the new look she wanted. No more shapeless blouses and ugly plaid skirts for herâ€|no more big hair either, because lets face it, an hour every morning that could have been better spent on sleep or homework was a little excessive. Together with her mother, Nadine and Mr Pinky, who had insisted on being involved seeing as it was his spokes-girl who was spending a huge wad of cash, she had picked out half a dozen skirts and twice as many blouses in a variety of colours and the cutest pair of black peep-toe heels she'd ever seen. She'd almost been enjoying herself, having to give an opinion on countless items of couture was proving to be a very effective distraction. It wasn't until she told Mr Pinky that she thought she'd picked out enough day wear that things went downhill pretty damn quickly.

"What about a prom dress?" Promâ€|Link... She saw her mother gesturing wildly out of the corner of her eye, no doubt trying to get him to stop talking but the damage had been done. Tracy's bottom lip began to tremble.

"Not today thank you. We need to get going after Tracy pays her bill." She managed to stop the tears from falling until she got outside. More than a hundred dollars of her own money gone and it had only stopped her crying for two hours, it didn't really seem worth it. Then again, it had felt like taking a step backwards to wear her old clothes after the pageant and her new clothes did make her look her age instead of twelve. At least she wasn't sobbing in publicâ€|that was something.

Link checked his watch, it had been two hours since Mr Turnblad had shut the door on his face and it occurred to Link that he might not have been telling the truth. Tracy might have been sat in the house knowing he was there and ignoring him. He wasn't about to defy Mr Turnblad and knock on the door again and Tracy clearly wasn't interested in talking to him. There was nothing else for him to but go back to his house and try to talk to her in the morning. He pulled away not paying much attention to the two figures in his rear view mirror.

"Wilbur we're home. Come look at Tracy, she got a makeover." Wilbur came out of the living room and saw his daughter's new look. In a knee-length black swing skirt and bright pink blouse Tracy looked very grown up, she was even wearing high heels.

"You look beautiful." Tracy smiled and hugged her father; he always knew the right thing to say to her.

"Thank you daddy." She stepped back and picked up all her shopping. "I'm going to go to bed. It's been a long day."

"I'll bring your dinner in when I've warmed it up." Edna's voice carried through Tracy's bedroom door but Tracy wasn't feeling hungry. The emptiness she felt couldn't be cured with food, as good as her mother's cooking was.

****I can't sleep tonight**

> Everybody knowing everything's not right
 and I can't close my eyes

> I'm seeing a tunnel at the end of all these lights
 Sunny days where have you gone?

> I get the strongest feeling I was wrong

When Edna came in with the plate of food Tracy was already asleep, her clothes were neatly laid out for the morning and her school bag was packed but she would have preferred that the room was a mess if it would mean that her little girl could sleep without that look of anguish on her face and a tear soaked pillow.

Tracy woke up for the seventh time just before six in the morning, her stomach growled and her head throbbed from a night of crying and fitful, restless dozing but what bothered her most, what made her want to crawl back under the covers, was the thought of being stuck on a bus full of people she didn't really know or like and having every single one of them, including the driver, wondering why she wasn't with Link. Tracy was just grateful that she didn't have history that day. Having Link and Amber in the same class today would just be torture and thankfully the universe hadn't decided to be that cruel. Her day was going to be bad enough as it was, the argument had been replaying in her head all night and she had a feeling that it wasn't going to stop just because she left the house. Tracy wished there was something she could do to change what had happened but she knew that no amount of marching could take back what had been said, especially the truthful parts. She didn't really know Link, Seaweed had told her more about himself than Link had. Link had showed her little more than his on-screen persona. Tracy had believed him capable of not only backing out of doing what was right but making a cheap joke about her size in the process. She had expected him to hurt her and it had got her so paranoid she'd ended up hurting them both. One perfect moment kissing him and then all that doubt had rushed in, the gossip hadn't helped but what really confused things was how she'd been finding herself looking at him like a hungry lioness at a zebra.

As she stared in the mirror Tracy could hardly recognise the face that looked back at her, her skin was pale and blotchy and her normally bright eyes were dull, bloodshot and red-rimmed, but now that her hair was only going to take fifteen minutes she did at least have time to try and fix her face after doing her 'do'. Trying to ignore how upset she still looked Tracy began her morning ritual of brushing out the knots in her hair and then backcombing some back in on the top of her head and spraying them into rigidity. The familiarity of her actions was oddly soothing and, as she clipped the back combed hair in place at the back of her hair and covered it in Ultra Clutch, Tracy had to concede that she did look more stylish with the simpler 'do' and it would look so much better when she danced than her old 'do' which had just wobbled stiffly, Penny had worn her hair in a very similar style to the Miss Hairspray pageant Tracy remembered with a small lip tremble. Determined to not make her face look any worse she pushed the memories aside and reached for her small make up collection and applying the base that would even out her complexion. Pale shimmer eye-shadow and barely there pink lipstick completed the transformation, Tracy was pleasantly surprised, she almost looked pretty. Unless someone was looking for the redness around her eyes nobody would know how long she'd been

crying for, or that she'd been crying at all. Slipping the outfit she'd worn home from Mr Pinky's back on Tracy took an experimental twirl, the skirt moved brilliantly and the high heels made her feel more confident, which was probably going to be a big help.

"Tracy are you awake?" Her mother opened the door and took in her daughter's polished appearance. "You look lovely hon. I've made you a fry up. I thought you'd be extra hungry this morning." Tracy gave her mother a smile, everything was going to be fine. She didn't care what was going to happen at school that day because even if it sucked everything was going to be fine. She had her parents and she had Penny. She might have just broken up with Link but she was going to be fine. Her clothes were new, her hair looked fantastic and she was going to be fine—|even if the bells had stopped ringing. Tracy ate her full English breakfast trying not to notice how her parents were sneaking glances at her when they thought she wasn't looking as if they expected her to burst into tears. Last night was bad but today was another beautiful Baltimore morning. One last make-up and hair check and she was ready to go. "Don't forget your lunch Tracy."

"It's already packed. I'll see you after the show." Tracy walked out of the house humming to herself and dancing every so often. The bum on his bar room stool did a double take, that big little girl looked kinda nice; then again he was already wasted.

**Why does it always rain on me?
> Is it because I lied **when I was seventeen?
> Why does it always rain on me?
 Even when the sun is shining
> I can't avoid the lightning

"Is that Tracy Turnblad?"

"Why isn't Link Larking taking her to school?"

"Did they break up?"

"Look at Tracy!"

The whispers had already started but Tracy was listening to her radio, a premeditated move to make sure she didn't break down on the bus, not that she would because everything was going to be fine. The next time the bus stopped to let on more kids a group of guys got on noticing that there was something different about Tracy Turnblad this morning. Tracy jumped when one of the boys tapped her on the shoulder—|Marvin, Martin—| she couldn't remember his name.

"Hi, mind if I sit here?"

"Go right ahead—|"

"Marshall."

"Right. Sorry Marshall, I'm Tracy." Marshall smiled.

"I know. You're on the Corney Collins Show."

"That's me."

"You're the favourite in our house, my little sister wants to be

Tracy Turnblad when she grows up." Tracy smiled.

"That's so sweet."

"Well my sister's got good taste." He couldn't be flirting could he? No, no that was impossible. Guys didn't flirt with Tracy Turnbladâ€¦except for Link and she'd managed to ruin that spectacularly. The bus pulled up in front of the school, saving Tracy from having to reply. "Can I walk you to class?" Holy crap he really was flirting.

"Iâ€¦I'm sorry, I've got to find my friends." Excusing herself Tracy quickly made her way to Penny and Seaweed.

"Tracy you look great. What's the occasion?" Tracy couldn't tell Penny what had happened without, privacy, food -preferably sugary- and lots of tissues.

"I'll tell you later. Everything's going to be fine, just as long as I don't seeâ€¦" The warning bell went. "I have to go. I'll see you later." Tracy pushed her way through the crowd ignoring the wolf whistles, they weren't for her anyway, opened her locker and found Link's picture staring back at her. Swallowing the lump in her throat Tracy took it down and put it on the small shelf in her locker before taking out the books that she needed and going to her first class.

"Hey Tracy! Shake it, don't break it!" Turning to see that it was only Seaweed's friend Germaine she rolled her eyes at him and carried on walking.

"What happened to Tracy Turnblad?"

"Did you see how Tracy looked? I've never seen anybody change so much overnight."

"I bet it was down to Link."

"She came on the bus this morning."

"Doesn't Link Larkin normally drive her to school?"

****I can't stand myself**

> I'm being held up by invisible men
 Still life on a shelf when

> I got my mind on something else
 Sunny days**** where have you gone?

> I get the strongest feeling I was wrong

Link walked through the corridors to his class trying to say stoic but with every word he got more and more worried about Tracy. He had to talk to her but he didn't have any classes with her. When he got to class he took a page out of his notebook and spent the entire lesson writing the short note he put in her locker.

My darlin

_I'm sorry if I made you think that I don't care about you, because I do, more than I can say. I didn't mean a word of what I said in the car, we should be together. You're not like any other girl I've ever

met. You're the bravest, kindest, most decent person I know. I don't deserve you, I always say the wrong thing and I keep hurting you without meaning to but I do want to be with you, more than I've ever wanted anything else in my whole life._

_I spoke to your father last night, he doesn't want me at the house anymore and I guess I understand. He told me about the last time you went swimming. Trace you know I'd never say that about you, well I hope you know that. I've always liked how you look. I meant to tell you at Maybelle's after the pageant but I didn't. When I saw you in dancing in detention with Seaweed you looked so happy, you didn't care what anybody thought, I'd never seen anybody look that free when they danced. I forgot how embarrassed you were when you saw me. All I remembered was how you moved and how pretty you looked. _

You looked prettier than ever today

I miss you

Yours always

Link

If you want to talk at lunch I'll be waiting at my locker

Link walked off, hurrying slightly because his detour to Tracy's locker had made him late for his next class, PE. It wasn't his favourite lesson but all the dancing he did meant he didn't suck at any athletic event, especially those requiring co-ordination and balance.

He was about to leave the male locker room and go to his next class when a couple of guys walked in talking about Tracy.

"I don't know what happened with Larkin last night but Tracy was looking pretty _bon _in French earlier." Link was puzzled; Tracy looked _good_, good enough to get complements from guys who never noticed her before? He wasn't being egotistical or anything but he'd expected her to not look her best after the fight they had, apparently she looked better than her best.

"I know what you mean. She can _couchez avec moi_ any _soir_ she likes." Not being stupid Link knew exactly what they were talking about and his hands became fists. He had never talked about girls like that, he'd never even _thought_ about any of the girls he dated in such a coarse way and to hear two guys talking about Tracy like that made him angrier than he'd thought possible.

"Who knew she was so stacked?"

"I know. Where the hell has she been hiding that rack? And you know what they say about fat chicks, they're so _grateful_ that you're paying them attention they'll do _anything _to keep you happy." Link felt his blood boil; deeply offended on behalf of the girl he cared about and beyond pissed that they were making her sound like a lonely, desperate whor...he couldn't even finish thinking the word, not when it was related to Tracy. "She's so short that she wouldn't even get her skirt dirty by kne-" Link's fist acted of its own accord and slammed into the face of the guy talking the vilest trash about Tracy. It was a distinctly Neanderthal reaction to what they had been

saying but Link just couldn't bring himself to care. Blood spurted from the guy's nose and dripped on to his clothes in what Link thought was a very satisfactory way as he stepped back. Hitting that guy had made his hand throb painfully, but it was worth it. Tracy didn't deserve to be talked about like that. She deserved the best, which he clearly wasn't. He should have known there was something wrong, at the very least he should have told her he loved her, that he'd been falling ever since her saw her dancing to Ladies' Choice.

****Why does it always rain on me?**

> Is it because I lied when I was seventeen?

 Why does it always rain on me?

> Even when the sun is shining

 I can't avoid the lightning

****Oh, where did the blue skies go?**

> And why is it raining so? It's so cold

>

On his way to the wash room to clean his hand Link got mobbed by a group of sophomore girls wanting autographs. He obliged them even though he didn't really feel like being Link Larkin television personality at that precise moment in time. Feeling eyes on him he looked around and saw Tracy with Penny and Seaweed. He realised how it must look, that he was just being the television heartthrob, and he excused himself as quickly as he could to go talk to her, tell her she looked beautiful in her new clothes, which she did. The warning bell sounded and the corridor began to fill.

"Darlin I wasn't" Tracy took in a breath and tried not to let the events of the previous night resound too loudly in her mind. Link saw that she was trying to hold herself together, she was hurt and doing her best to hide it, much like he was.

"I get it Link. It's fine." Oh no, those had been the exact words she'd said to him at the platter party.

"Tracy about last night..."

"I can't not at school, not in the middle of the day." He understood, there was still most of the school day left, not to mention the show and there was no guarantee of privacy until after they'd finished broadcasting.

"Now isn't the time. I'm singing on the show later, it's I picked the song for a reason." Tracy nodded in understanding and turned to leave, Link let her walk away from him secure in the knowledge that if anybody could help him reassure Tracy, it was Elvis. When he sang 'Don't Be Cruel', which he had picked out of the dozen or so Elvis songs in his repertoire last week, she'd realise that she was the only one for him, even if he had to sing it instead of saying it. Seaweed and Penny followed Tracy, sharing confused looks along with the rest of the slowly growing audience.

****I can't sleep tonight**

> Everybody knowing everything's not right

 and I can't close my eyes

> I'm seeing a tunnel at the end of all these lights

 Sunny days where have you gone?

> I get the strongest feeling I was wrong

The rest of the morning was torture, the whole school had heard about the awkward conversation, drawing their own conclusions which they discussed openly and constantly. Tracy went to her locker to drop off books she didn't need, there was a small pile of paper on the floor that had fallen from her open locker, notes, the first was Marshall's number, the second was from a boy she didn't even know, as was the third, she shoved them all on top of the poster of Link that had previously adorned her locker door and went to lunch with Penny and Seaweed. A couple of corridors away Link waited by his locker hoping that his note had gotten through to Tracy. If it hadn'tâ€|well he didn't want to think about that. Everything was going to be fine.

**

> Why does it always rain on me?
 Is it because I lied when I was seventeen?

> Why does it always rain on me?
 Even when the sun is shining

> I can't avoid the lightning
 Oh, where did the blue skies go?

> And why is it raining so?
 Its so cold

> Why does it always rain on me?
 Why does it always rain...**

**

* * *

>Link leaving Tracy a note appeared in chapter three of TiffanyNyC's story 'For Always and Forever', which I totally recommend, but I got the idea of Marshall leaving Tracy a note in her locker with his number on it and a couple of others doing similar things which would theoretically make her feel better about herselfâ€|then I came up with Link's note, then its significance. It'll all come out later and I can't say anything else without giving away major spoilers but it will play an important part later onâ€|one of the chapters in the early teens I think.<p><p>**

10. Chapter 10 Lonely Day

This chapter comes after some major academic failure on my part and is dedicated to all the mature cultured people on the Zikki and Trink threads over at fan forumâ€|..BUTT GRABBAGE!!!

* * *

>-Lonely Day-<p><p>

Not being stupid Seaweed Stubbs was well aware that there was something bugging his friend Tracy and that Link was almost definitely the cause of the problem. Girls didn't talk to guys about their relationships with other guys so if he was going to be any help he was going to have to make himself scarce. He spotted Skillet in the distance as the three of them made their way to the bleachers.

"Baby I promised Skillet I'd help him with his trig homeworkâ€|do you mind if I have lunch with him today?" Seaweed glanced at Tracy who wasn't looking at him, clearly distracted by whatever was troubling

her. Penny seemed to understand.

"Sure. I'll still see you after the show right?"

"You can come to the studio if you like. The bus'll be pretty jammed so you might have to sit on my lap." Penny smiled shyly blushing at memories she had only shared vague impressions of with Tracy.

"I don't mind." Tracy walked behind them dwelling on the short conversation she'd had with Link in the corridor. He'd picked the song he was going to sing in the show that day—he picked it because it summed up how he felt. As much as she racked her brain she couldn't remember what the song was supposed to be. It wasn't 'Ladies' Choice' or 'It Takes Two' she knew that much. She had a feeling it might be Elvis but that didn't really tell her anything. Because of Link's understandable admiration of 'The King' Tracy had heard a lot of his music and there wasn't a common theme to all of them except that they were all great. Looking up Tracy realised that Seaweed had left at some point and she hadn't even noticed.

"When did Seaweed leave?"

"He had to go help Skillet with something. It's just us for lunch, that'll be nice huh? We haven't had lunch alone since—"

"Since before Seaweed—and Link." Penny tried to smile but it became more like a grimace, she really wasn't used to Tracy being unhappy. It was usually Tracy comforting her about her crazy mother. She watched her friend take a half-hearted bite of her sandwich and decided to bite the bullet.

"So is there anything you want to talk about?" Tracy glanced at her friend and sighed putting down the delicious sandwich that tasted like ashes.

****Such a lonely day and it's mine****

****The most loneliest day of my life ****

"We had a stupid fight last night. I said some things I didn't really mean and Link took it the wrong way. Penny I think he broke up with me." Tracy bit her lip to keep it from wobbling, while crying in friend's arms seemed like a good idea she was desperately trying to keep it together.

"No, I'm sure he didn't mean that. Link's crazy about you. I thought you sorted this out, talked to him."

"I can't talk to him, he doesn't talk to me—How do you tell Seaweed things you're too embarrassed to tell anybody else, even me?"

"He's my boyfriend—I just tell him."

"Even when you don't know how he'll react?"

"I nearly always know how he'll react before I tell him. I know him." Penny was trying to be reassuring but it was just leaving Tracy with more questions than answers.

"You know him?"

"Yeah, I go to his house every day for dinner and we talk about everything, music, books, school, films, our families, what we want to do after graduationâ€|whatever's on our minds." Tracy was suddenly envious of the openness of Penny and Seaweed's relationship. Even as Link's biggest fan, in both senses of the word, she knew a depressingly little amount about him.

"I don't even know Link's favourite colourâ€|three years of watching the show and I know as little about him as he does about me." Penny mused on what Tracy had just said and a light came on, she was having a thoughtâ€|yes that was definitely a thought.

"I think that's part of the problem."

"What is?"

"We've been watching that show together for three years, you've made Link into some sort of Elvisâ€|"

"Penny what are you saying?"

"Link might be on television five times a week but so are you and so is Seaweed. I don't know when it happened but you've forgotten something pretty important. Elvis is a superstarâ€|the king of rock n roll but to Priscilla he's just her man. Link's a star when he's in front of the camera, you're all stars, but when he's not in front of the cameras he's just a boy like you and me." Tracy had to laugh at Penny's verbal slip up. It was her first laugh in quite a while and she'd forgotten how good it felt. "Iâ€|you know what I mean. He's human like the rest of us."

"You might be right Penny. I've been in love with Link Larkin dancer on 'The Corney Collins Show' for so long that I can't help thinking that's all of who he is." Tracy looked at her watch and realised that a significant portion of lunch had already passed. "We'd better shut up and eat before lunch is over."

In the main building Link was having similar thoughts, lunch was more than half over and he was going to have to accept that Tracy didn't want to talk to him. It didn't necessarily mean that she never wanted to talk to him, there was still a chance that she'd talk to him at the studio, maybe she'd not read his note. As he ate his lunch, still leaning against his locker, Link tried to convince himself that it was just bad luck and timing that preventing Tracy from talking to him but by the end of lunch he'd heard exaggerated rumours about what had happened in the locker-room. If he was Tracy he wouldn't want to talk to him either after hearing that he'd viciously attacked somebody with a baseball bat. Of course she wouldn't believe that was what really happened, she knew him better than that, he hoped she knew him better than that.

****Such a lonely day should be banned****

****It's a day that I can't stand****

****The most loneliest day of my life****

****The most loneliest day of my life****

**

* * *

>"Link Larkin went crazy after PEâ€|"

"Hit him with a baseball batâ€|"

"Broke his noseâ€|"

"Rushed to hospitalâ€|"

As the words filtered through Tracy's built in BS filter she began to worry. What exactly had happened? Sometimes rumours started from nothing but more often than not there was something behind them. She hadn't assaulted an eagle scout with a crowbar but she had tapped a policeman on the back of the head with a sign. What had Link done? Her memory failed her again as she tried in vain to remember if Link's hands had been swollen or bruised when she saw himâ€|his face had been as perfectly handsome as usual and he hadn't seemed to be in any pain when he'd walked over to her. Whatever had happened Link hadn't been hurtâ€|implying that he may have been the aggressor. A painful knot formed in her stomach at the thought. What could drive somebody like Link, who was definitely more of a lover than a fighter, to violence? Tracy clung to the hope that the reality of what happened would show Link in a better light than the ugly rumours did. She found it hard to believe that the hand that had held hers so gently had become a fist that had broken somebody's nose. Taking her seat next to Penny in the next class Tracy knew that there would be no escaping the gossip so she might as well talk to her best friend about it.

"Psst, Penny." Tracy whispered in her friend's direction. "I heard the most horrid rumour on the way here. Did you hear it?"

"No what was it?"

"It's awfulâ€|"

"As fascinating as am sure you're conversation is Miss Turnblad I would appreciate it if you and Miss Pingelton let me do my job." After mumbling an apology Tracy wrote Penny a note and passed it when the teacher's back was turned.

P, People are saying Link broke somebody's nose before we saw him in the corridorâ€|I don't want to believe it. What do you think? T

T, I don't think it's true. People are always saying nasty things about me and Seaweed, none of them have been true.

Penny was a little off with her timing and got caught moving back after giving Tracy the note.

"You two again! If I see you passing any more notes I'll make you read them out to the class. One more disturbance and you'll be removed to detention." Sighing quietly in resignation Tracy took to doodling in her notebook. _**Link Larkin + Tracy Turnblad?**_**Link Larkin.**_**Link. **_Staring at the board she realised she didn't understand a single thing that was written on it. her hand started moving of it's own volition, writing _**x Link x**_ on the desk. Link

was all she could think about, no matter what happened he was always on her mind. "I will not have graffiti artists in my classroom Tracy Turnblad." Detention was a welcome relief, at least Tracy knew she'd be amongst friends.

"Hey Tracy. Penny not with you?" Seaweed smiled, looking up from his chemistry textbook.

"No, she wasn't the one doodling on her desk. Have you heard the latest rumour?" The smile dimmed, he'd heard a fair few ugly rumours circulating about all of them but he tried not to pay attention.

"I'm out of the loop this time. You gonna clue me in?" Tracy sat at the desk next to her friend, not really wanting everybody to hear her.

"Link supposedly broke somebody's nose todayâ€|right before we saw him."

"What? That candyass crackerâ€|" He was about to laugh, Link had been worried about going to North Avenue, there was no way he'd hit somebody hard enough to break their nose, Tracy's face stopped him.

"What if there's something in it? What if he did do something?" Tracy put her head on the desk and groaned. "I really didn't need this, not today."

****Such a lonely day shouldn't exist****

****It's a day that I'll never miss****

****Such a lonely day and it's mine****

****The most loneliest day of my life ****

"I don't think Larkin did what people are saying, I don't think he's got it in him, but maybeâ€|I could understand why he might have done something." Tracy looked up and saw Seaweed with new eyes.

"You could?"

"Hold up, I'm not saying I could or would beat somebody into a bloody pulp butâ€|" His eyes fell on the pages of his textbook. "It's like chemistry. You can put two substances together and nothing will happen, no reaction no matter how long you wait but if you add a catalystâ€|" Tracy's brows came together in confusion; chemistry wasn't her best subject, even when she was paying attention.

"A what?"

"A catalyst is something that causes a reaction to happen or speed up, it's not involved in the end products of the reaction but it's presence made it happen. You and Link weren't getting on well this morningâ€|"

"We sort of broke up last night. You think that might have been theâ€|what did you say, catalyst?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry Tracy, about you andâ€¦"

"Thanks. I don't really want to talk about it."

"Ok. What lesson have you come from?"

"English Literature."

"Any idea what was on the board?"

"Not a clue, it wasn't in English." Seaweed smiled again.

"It was probably Shakespeare. Here, take my notes on 'Romeo and Juliet'." Seaweed handed Tracy a notebook full of comprehensive notes on the famous tragedy and they spent the rest of the period quietly studying in comfortable silence while the rest of the kids danced and talked over the music that was coming from somebody's radio.

* * *

>"He called Tracy fat and Link went postalâ€¦"<p><p>

"I heard they had a huge bust up last nightâ€¦"

"Maybe Link caught them togetherâ€¦"

"Do you think so?"

On the way to her last class the rumours followed Tracy like she was the Pied Piper of gossip. It didn't help that the guy Link had allegedly punched, Doug Firwood, was in the class opposite hers. She didn't know why Link would hit anybody, even with last night as a catalyst. Then again she had shouted at Amber in class and felt like hitting her in the restroom, Amber was by far the most provocative venomous girl in Baltimore so Tracy wasn't alone in her feelings, although Amber seemed to be giving her special attention. When the class let out Tracy was the first out the door anxious to not miss the bus to the studio and desperate to get away from her classmates. Apparently she wasn't the only one who wanted to get away from the whispering masses; Doug was also first out of his class.

Tracy gasped when she saw his face, the area below his left eye was swollen, a bruise already darkening his skin. There were traces of dried blood under his nose which was also swollen and painful looking. Thankfully it wasn't broken but that was small comfort to Tracy when faced with the reality of what Link was capable of. She was having trouble believing that it was Link that had hurt him. Link had never intentionally hurt anybody, except maybe Amber by kissing her before they'd technically split up.

"Are you done?" Doug sounded annoyed, Tracy couldn't really blame him for not being happy but she hadn't done anything to him besides looking at his face. Two of the three most talked about people in school coming face to face in a corridor was a golden opportunity to get up to date with the latest events as they unfold, it was no surprise that a crowd was beginning to gather.

"I'm sorry." He sneered. It was a distinctly unattractive expression.

"Sorry for staring or sorry that your Elvis wannabe boyfriend has a temper?" Tracy flushed with guilt because she had been staring but she could quash the indignation that she felt on Link's behalf even if there was an element of truth in what was said.

****And if you go I wanna go with you****

****And if you die I wanna die with you ****

"Link doesn't have a temper." _That is, he didn't have one until today_, she added mentally. Doug rolled his eyes and Tracy felt like she was being patronised.

"Yeah Link Larkin floored me because he's such a swell guy, he's a saint really. I bet he opens all your doors for you." Doug laughed bitterly. "It's not like I said anything he wasn't already thinkingâ€|" he cocked his head to one side and gave her a considering look, "or doing." Tracy felt tainted just by being in the same corridor as the lecherous ass. As embarrassed and confused as Tracy had been by her feelings when she saw Link nearly naked in the pool, she'd never felt as dirty as she did near Doug. He was justâ€|wrong, in lots of ways.

****Take your hand and walk away ****

"I have to go." Tracy turned and walked away praying that nobody on the bus to the studio would mention any of the rumours.

As luck would have it Seaweed and Penny had saved her a seat in the bus to the studio. Tracy was content to stare out of the window from her place on the back seat and let her mind wander as her friends sat with their arms around each other. It didn't take long for her mind to wander in Link's direction, a couple of nanoseconds at most.

As well as Tracy knew Link Larkin the celebrity she barely knew Link Larkin the person, maybe she wasn't the only one keeping secrets. In the month and a half since Brenda had gone on maternity leave from the show Link had only volunteered information about himself once at that was before they had gone to Motormouth Maybelle's platter party. That confession had been almost painful.

* * *

>Despite her huge crush on Link, Tracy hadn't followed him every day and watched him eat because she knew from experience that having people watching you eat was a very disconcerting experience and she'd never eat a thing if she was busy staring at him, besides watching girls fawn over him wasn't her idea of fun.<p><p>

She'd never realised that he'd eaten school lunches every single school day since kindergarten because there was nobody at home to make him a packed lunch. Being overly-aware of all things Link, Tracy soon learned that he never took a snack to the studio like most kids did, especially ones that had mothers who could cook like her mama could. About three weeks into her television career Link brushed passed her on his way to talk to Corney and she'd heard his stomach rumble.

"Sorry Trace, hope I didn't dent your doâ€|again." Blushing at the memory that caused the ringing bells Tracy pulled an apple out of her

bag intending to share her food with Link, a mark of true affection for any Turnblad.

"Link, catch!" Spinning on his heels at the sound of his name Link plucked the apple out of the air as it came towards him.

"Thanks little darlin. I'm starving." Link bit into the juicy green apple and Tracy prayed that she didn't start drooling.

"My mama always packs me extra food now I'm on the show, maybe you should ask your ma to pack you a bigger lunch so you can save something." Link swallowed his mouthful of apple and was slightly envious of Tracy for having at least one attentive parent, which was one more than he had.

****The most loneliest day of my life****

"I eat in the cafeteria," he said, not wanting to share his past with her or bring a frown to her pretty and perpetually smiling face. Tracy wasn't fazed, there was more than one way to skin a cat, or feed one.

"Well maybe you could just ask for a couple of sandwiches." Swallowing another bite of the succulent apple Link smoothed down an imaginary stray hair.

"I can't do that doll." Tracy tried not to blush as Link's tongue darted out to lick apple juice from his lips. Her heart was threatening to burst.

"Oh I'm sure your mama won't be angry at you for asking. My ma runs a laundry business out of our living room and she still finds time to do all sorts for me and my dad, she doesn't ever mind." Link's face became serious as he became painfully aware of what he was without. Mrs Turnblad sounded like a great mother. Tracy was so lucky to have a mom like that, not that she didn't deserve one.

****The most loneliest day of my life ****

"You don't get it Trace. I can't ask my mother because I don't have one, she's dead." Tracy'd had no idea and she became visibly upset at the thought of bringing up something so painful to him and by the thought of losing her own beloved mama.

"Link Iâ€¦I'm so sorry. I had no idea." He was surprised at how much she was affected by his revelation, and how much he was affected by her reaction to it. He really didn't like seeing her upset. It was odd because he was never really bothered when Amber threw one of her fits.

"Woah, woah darlin, there's nothing to apologise for. It was years ago. It's fine." Tracy seemed to calm down slightly.

"But I kept going onâ€¦" A pleasantly familiar voice interrupted her.

"Two minutes to show time!" Corney Collins walked over to them. "You two ready for 'Ladies' Choice'? You were both on fire at the hop..." Link put his TV smile back on.

"Don't worry Corney, Tracy's still smouldering and when have I ever let you down?" Corney mirrored Link's grin.

"That would be never. Get to your places and I'll be with you in sixty seconds." The host left them alone again and Link's smile went from TV bright to a more normal wattage that did funny things to Tracy's insides.

"Showtime." Tracy's insides did a somersault as he winked at her before walking to his place on the set, leaving the apple core at the side of Amber's mirror. The owner of the mirror had seen the whole exchange and set about thinking up some nasty rumours about the new girl in town—special ed—maybe something about her and the football team.

* * *

>As the bus pulled into the station parking lot Tracy wondered what other painful secrets Link might be hiding, did have any other wounds that he kept to himself? She realised that this frustration and sense of futility must have been exactly how Link felt about her reticence to talk to him. They made quite a pair.<p><p>

The most loneliest day of my life

Such a lonely day and it's mine

It's a day that I'm glad I survived

* * *

>Song is 'Lonely Day' by system of a down. The song Link was originally planning to sing for Tracy, 'don't be cruel' by Elvis really fits with how Link is feeling but I didn't see how I could put it in this chapter—maybe I'll fit it in somewhere later, you could always look up the lyrics if you like. I know it will definitely be going in the fanmix I'm planning to make at the end of this. I'll put the link in my profile when it's done and on fanforum in the LT thread. Yes I did make his name Douglas Firwood, I save my imagination for more deserving characters.

End
file.